







REVELATIONS  
OF  
PRISON LIFE;

WITH AN ENQUIRY INTO  
PRISON DISCIPLINE  
AND  
SECONDARY PUNISHMENTS.

BY  
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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS GOVERNOR OF THE HOUSE OF CORRECTION,  
AT COLD BATH FIELDS.

IN TWO VOLUMES,  
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## P R E F A C E.

AT a moment when the matter of Prison Discipline has become of real national importance, and ministers and legislators lack the foresight to discern a mode of extrication from the doubt and perplexity encircling secondary punishments, it cannot be inopportune to take an expansive view of so momentous a subject. Those most conversant with its details by no means despair of a practical solution of its difficulties. They anticipate, as neither hopeless nor remote, a sound and definite system of penal visitation, of easy application, and of the requisite capacity to embrace every phase of delinquency.

From the history of the largest prison in the world—as I believe that of Cold Bath Fields to be—the nation

may derive instruction to shape its future course. We there see how formidable obstacles were overcome, and gradual ameliorations progressed, even with inadequate space, and at best with a defective machinery. Encouragement fortifies our hopes, while prudence warns us to become practical, and to discard the vain theories which have caused so much disappointment. Thus, we must learn to study the real character of crime and criminals, to mark the variations in the education, pursuits, temptations, and degrees of hopefulness of the criminal classes, and divine the necessity for a comprehensive scheme of repression, on the one hand, and of moral reformation on the other.

I have essayed to examine the subject in its multifarious branches, to unmask the fallacies of one overlauded system, and to caution the public against exaggerated expectations from any other. I strive to define bygone evils, and to point to an efficient remedy, and thus to indicate a means of disentanglement from the existing strange perplexities.

I have a word to say upon my own claims as a prison reformer, a character which I feel it a pride to assume. I cannot expunge from my memory the foul abominations which I had to suppress, nor the danger that menaced me in the fulfilment of that task. My pecuniary recompense has not been proportionate with my

labours, nor should I have any difficulty in showing that the majority of the magistrates, at the period of my retirement, were of that opinion; and, moreover were prepared to support an amendment to increase it. My pension is a mere fraction of the *interest only* of the sums saved to the county by my earlier administration. I preferred, however, a peaceful unanimity to an issue alloyed by strife; and, consequently, amendments to increase my annuity were withdrawn at my personal instance.

But, although I consented to forego pecuniary advantages, I cling the more tenaciously to the credit of my past exertions; when, beset with fraud, ferocity, and moral pollution, I achieved a triumph fraught with civilizing influences. In the decline of my existence, I may be pardoned for attesting, with pride, the value of my earlier services. In that retrospect I find a consolation for many subsequent trials, and for later disappointments.

G. L. CHESTERTON.



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# REVELATIONS OF PRISON LIFE.

## CHAPTER I.

ANCIENT CHARACTER OF PRISONS—CRIMINALS, THEIR  
CALLINGS, LANGUAGE, AND PERVERSITY.

STRANGERS to the interior of prisons are apt to associate with those receptacles whatever constitutes ferocity, gloom, and impurity. Years, nay, ages, of dire neglect in their administration, and the unrestrained licentiousness of their inmates, had tended to affix a stigma upon such establishments; to sicken and horrify the public mind with their most ordinary details; and, at length, to

alienate from their internal management every one who could boast of character, or who had a regard for decorum. A purely nominal jurisdiction, consequently, betokened their control, while in reality, hardly a passing thought was bestowed upon their unhallowed precincts.

Cleanliness scarcely seemed to be a necessary requirement; all care to ensure the space indispensable to common decency was deemed superfluous; the safe-guards upon modesty were rudely cast aside, and shameless profligacy unblushingly prevailed. The lowest order of men only aspired to dispense the functions of a gaol, while the name itself was of evil omen, and its very sound became odious to those of honest and peaceful vocations. A 'gaol' was an obscene den, a 'gaoler' its coarse and surly guardian; the familiar epithet of 'gaol bird,' denoted the lowest roving criminal; while the common allusion to 'gaol fevers,' attested the foul contagion inseparable from the foetid hold of the vicious outcast.

This complication of mischiefs had been

festering for years, with merely intermittent attempts to assuage their intensity; not yet had the corruption of some gaols reached their climax, when fortuitous circumstances brought me into collision with their practical details, scarcely modified by the tardy march of improvement in all our public institutions, but still deeply stained with the taint and defilement of barbarous times.

It became my happy privilege to prove useful in the work of regeneration, where its need was a crying exigency, and I may be pardoned for looking back with honest pride upon exertions which public avowal has flatteringly confessed to have been fraught with benefit to society at large. My emphatic claim is to have been one of the humble instruments in the hands of Providence (and my conscience tells me I was no sluggish or lukewarm participator) in that onward and eventful movement, by whose civilizing influence, the chief prison of the metropolitan county (perhaps the most extensive in the world) was transformed from one of the worst specimens of corruption and misrule, into an establishment distinguished

for industry, order, and impressive discipline. Many provincial gaols have now assumed the aspect of structures purified by wholesome ventilation, by light and cleanliness, and can boast of salutary discipline, while that of which I am about to treat—albeit of irregular form and contracted dimensions—extorts the wonder and admiration of all who first survey it. Thus, Middlesex became the pioneer in what may be termed the last, but effectual advance in the right direction.

The prison of Cold Bath Fields, is one of such surpassing magnitude, as to have numbered within its walls, during the year 1854, the extraordinary daily average of 1400 souls; and at one time, within that period, no less than 1596 inmates were subject to its stringent discipline. So vast an establishment could not fail to present a subject for scrutiny and reflection, of a nature as varied as it was painfully absorbing.

Its numerous occupants were as diversified in disposition and pursuits, as were their features and stature, while it rarely happened that we could not number, amongst its hetero-

geneous inmates, some men of education, and erst of respectability ; with, others of high connexions, or of former position in society.

The most depraved depredators differed in the application of the worst propensities, and thus, the burglar, the pick-pocket, the area-sneak, the begging-letter impostor, and the filthy vagrant, presented distinctive phases of violence, adroitness, craft, and idleness. The dashing swindler, who had conned and relied upon the refinement and technicality of the law, but who, sailing rather too closely to the wind, had drifted into the meshes of constructive criminality, would sometimes also be found within those walls ; while another class of men, whose shameless calling inflicts a pestilent scourge upon society, would be found there also, to demonstrate the depth of infamy into which turpitude and avarice combined could sink their votaries. These degenerate wretches, the vendors of obscene books and prints, were generally men of some education, but so utterly devoid of conscience, as to realize enormous profits by their iniquitous traffic. Some of the devices adopted by these miscreants displayed

contrivances to sap the peace and purity of the young, which fully entitled them to the designation of an M.D., who treating of such sordid panderers to vice, appropriately styled them "the most loathsome of all the emissaries of hell."

Circumstances would induce certain criminals to trespass on the vocation of others, and thus we daily saw illustrated the absurdity of an arbitrary legal classification. The same individual would, at intervals, personify the felon, the rogue and vagabond, and the misdemeanant; or, indeed, assume any other guise favourable to the advancement of whatever nefarious scheme he might chance to contemplate.

One vice was more or less conspicuous amongst *all* classes, and the debauchery universally prevailing, most generally resulted in confirmed drunkenness. Riotous behaviour, assaults, and wilful damage were, consequently, fruitful causes of incarceration, and the recent felon became entitled to a less penal costume; and thus it happened, that vast numbers were, in the course of time, occupants of every ward in the prison.

Knavery suggests to rural delinquents the pursuits of poaching, robbing orchards, or gardens, and abstracting fish from the preserved waters ; while the abandoned habits of the entire clique would lead to frequent convictions for outrages against the conventional decencies of society.

In traversing the wards of so vast a field for observation, the eye would survey a combination of different ages, features, and delinquencies, and there existed the widest scope for speculative contemplation, and for a conjectural discernment of character, in which most strangers were wont to indulge.

It seems almost superfluous to affirm how largely the lowest neighbourhoods of the metropolis, and of our populous manufacturing towns, contribute their quota to the pests and outcasts which infest society ; and how, above all things, those fœtid localities engender that fertile parent of every vice, *idleness*. To those familiar with public depredators, the lounging, loitering, attributes of the lowest vagabonds at once proclaim their peculiar habits, and the character of their haunts.



Thus, the dens of Westminster, the Borough, Cow Cross, the alleys of Grays Inn Lane, and Whitechapel, stand attested in the mere gait and sinister aspect of these degraded beings. Reared from infancy without the slightest initiation into useful industry, they present the example of creatures swathed in vice, nurtured in the foulest degeneracy, and, at length, launched into an active participation in fraud and spoliation. How much of pity ought, in mercy, to mingle with the reproaches of those born and reared under the sweet influence of good and virtuous parents, whose early watchfulness and salutary tuition tend towards those happier auspices in social progression.

It is only, however, the thoroughly instructed in the arcana of crime who know the dire extent of this frightful abandonment. The ordinary language of public reprobates is not only to the last degree foul and revolting, but it is, moreover, intensely curious. Some studious miscreant appears to have closely analysed, and industriously sifted the elements of language, in order to select and embody its most refined abominations. The ordinary con-

versation, therefore, of such outcasts is a compound of whatever is gross, brutal, and disgusting; but still so wickedly ingenious as to constitute a startling science. In this glossary, every term and epithet calculated to shock, revolt, and surprise, is strung together seemingly to convey the most common-place idea, in the most abandoned form of words.

Propriety forbids one solitary example, and yet a few of the familiar phrases out of this odious vocabulary would produce intense amazement at the contemplation of an ingenuity so signally impure and blasphemous. "Oh, sir," said the younger Caspar (one of the parties convicted of the gold-dust robbery some years ago, and who had been remanded to the New Prison at Clerkenwell, where he was herded with the common crowd.) "Oh! sir, I had read of the language and conversation of the lowest criminals, but I had not the remotest idea of its reality! It is too dreadful to contemplate!!" Dreadful, indeed, but yet singularly curious; and exhibiting a depth and subtlety of research, which betokens a laborious diligence in the construction of sentences devoid of decency.

After the foregoing synopsis of the impurities resulting from criminal education and association, the reader would hardly be prepared for the disclosure of any one redeeming quality in such a mass of vice and ignorance. And yet, the manifestation of innate, but long concealed virtue, is a fact too largely observable by the philanthropic supervisor, to admit of any doubt whatever. Kindly deportment, gentle words, and the patient attention bestowed on trifling requests, will kindle a grateful expression in the eye, and extort an unmistakeable gleam of satisfaction, to be in due season still further displayed by willing acts. Let the superior require a passing assistance, or utter a casual order, or desire a trifling alteration, the ready bound and cheerful alacrity to execute either, testify to a zealous desire to please. A sudden and unlooked-for service of this kind is always followed by a cheerful smile, indicative of the pleasure which an implied approval has conferred upon the doer of a simple act.

After a short period of submission to the discipline and instruction of a well-ordered

prison, a softening influence seems imperceptibly to improve the expression of the features of many an hitherto neglected child of misery, and gleams of growing intelligence begin to irradiate the countenance. Patience, submission, industry, and creditable emulation become daily strengthened, and the most superficial observer will discern the silent march of amelioration. Here, then, the reflective mind becomes pained by the contemplation of the cruel fortuitous lot of these ill-fated creatures. Debarred from the early and blessed advantages enjoyed by the more favoured of their species, they seem to be stripped of every redeeming hope. When good impressions begin to germinate, and loftier aspirations inspire their souls, they are discharged ; and again, by dire necessity, are hurled into the same vortex of abomination, where every nascent principle becomes stifled, and a recurrence to all that is odious and demoralizing is forced upon them.

It must not, however, be supposed that these remarks are of universal application. Far from it. There are vast numbers of criminals who appear to be dispossessed of every

hopeful quality. Their sole instinct seems to be that of blind selfishness, and, with the view of promoting their own ends, they resort to the lowest conceivable cunning. Indeed, so flimsy and transparent are their pretences that the acute observer often wonders how they can be so utterly senseless as not to discern the weakness of their feeble contrivances. They lie, to be sure, with imperturbable hardihood; invent with cool effrontery; swear the most fearful oaths, and invoke the most solemn names, as often as it suits their purpose—but all with no avail. The practised mind penetrates into the mere assumption of truthfulness, and detects the hollowness of all their professions. The consequence is, the more they asseverate the less they are trusted, and the harder the swearing the more surely is their hypocrisy laid bare. Nothing short of confirmatory testimony will impart validity to their declarations, and thus their clumsy fictions completely defeat their object.

In like manner are the short-sightedness and want of all reasonable calculation of this besotted class equally discernible. Endless

detection and repeated imprisonments fail to influence their future schemes. It is useless to admonish or to warn. In vain may you attempt to illustrate the hopelessness of persevering depredation, by pointing to the notorious ill success of antecedent attempts. The dogged and scowling expression assumed is clearly interpreted into contempt, and a mistrust of the counsel you tender; and the habitual observer can distinctly peruse the mental resolve to go on, relying upon their own favourite term—"better luck next time."

The successful swell-mobsmen are few; the lowest thieves reap only poverty and rags. Their outward appearance betrays them, and invites the scrutiny of the police, as soon as they are seen; and these miserable beings scarcely know what it is to enjoy one month of freedom from incarceration.

Still, however, the absence of all intellectual vigour; or an idle, wandering propensity; or an innate love of thieving for its own especial excitement, or, more predominantly, the advice and encouragement of vicious associates, with whom the youthful thief, of either sex, indulges

in the most polluting profligacy—either, or a combination of these causes, will retain these unfortunates in a life of criminal adventure—chequered by occasional snatches of debasing pleasure, but embittered by real discomfort from fear, pursuit, and frequent capture—terminating, at length, in inevitable transportation.

## CHAPTER II.

THE PRISON: ITS ORIGINAL CONDITION AND TARDY  
REFORMATION—PUBLIC DEPREDATORS AND COR-  
RUPT POLICE FUNCTIONARIES—THE CONSEQUENCES.

THE House of Correction, at Cold Bath Fields, was erected in the year 1794. Its site, at that epoch, well entitled it to the third term in its designation, which it has ever since retained ; and the magistrates of that day missed an opportunity of purchasing and enclosing, at a comparatively small cost, a much larger tract of land. It is now overlooked from buildings abutting upon it—an inconvenience which might have been obviated by timely foresight.



The ground, purchased for the purpose by the county magistrates, cost £4,350 ; and the original building was constructed at a cost of £65,656. Conformably with the notions of that period, the building was massive, overloaded with ponderous iron gates, window-frames, and fastenings ; while narrow entrances and passages were designed to render a sudden outburst of prisoners impracticable.

The specifications required that the whole structure should be composed of the best materials, and completed with the most approved workmanship. The late Mr. Samuel Mills, of Russell-square—an able and indefatigable magistrate, who rejoiced in the part he had borne with others, in uprooting the corruption that had long prevailed—informed me that impure gains had been acquired by individuals in collusion with the builders of that prison. This was made manifest to us in the year 1833, when the cholera, which had raged so fatally in the preceding year, had rendered a close examination of the sewers a matter of crying necessity. It was then discovered that the arches, which ought to have been turned

with cement, had been so loosely constructed, that the bricks had fallen in, choked up the outlet for impurities, and stagnant accumulations had unquestionably engendered cholera, and, for a time, defied its eradication.

Mr. Mills, the authority I have quoted above, was not one of those specious reasoners, whose sensitive imagination induced him to cloak iniquity, lest its disclosure should taint the honour of the commission—a doctrine I heard, with surprise, propounded in open court : on the contrary, he made no secret of the venality which had erst degraded the magistracy. Amongst other things, he informed me that country justices had administered their functions in their own houses, and so unblushingly received ample fees, as to have won for their residences the bye-word of “justice-shops.” He even named one, then living, who had been distinguished by such a discreditable traffic ; and, in dilating upon the prevailing corruption of the period, Mr. Mills expressed his conviction that magistrates had pocketed gains from the funds allotted to the erection of the prison.

Certain it is, that the large outlay of £65,650, at that distant period, merely to produce a structure containing 232 cells, the precise number erected, does appear to be a prodigal expenditure, quite disproportioned to the accommodation secured.

From my own observations, at a later period, I can well picture to myself the monstrous arrangements prevailing in those earlier times. The late Mr. Robert Sibley, well known, and much respected, first as the county surveyor, and subsequently as surveyor of a district, has frequently described to me the scenes he witnessed when he first became acquainted with the county. Men and women, boys and girls were indiscriminately herded together, in this chief county prison, without employment, or wholesome control; while smoking, gaming, singing, and every species of brutalizing conversation and demeanour, tended to the unlimited advancement of crime and pollution.

Meanwhile, the governor of that day, walked about, bearing in his hand a knotted rope, and ever and anon, he would seize some unlucky

wight by the collar or arm, and rope's-end him severely; thus exhibiting a warning example of summary corporeal chastisement calculated to overawe refractory beholders.

It was, doubtless, some such treatment of criminals as this, that induced the late Sir Francis Burdett, at the period of his early career, and after his unsuccessful struggle with Mainwaring, for the representation of Middlesex (his opponent being the County Chairman of Quarter Sessions) so to decry the monstrosities of Cold Bath Fields, as considerably to excite the popular mind on the subject, and the exposures then made, secured for that prison the name of the 'Bastile.' Governor Aris, (who had formerly been a baker in Clerkenwell) was denounced, and became notorious as a reputed tyrant and torturer. He was ultimately ejected from his office, and died in poverty. Many years subsequently to those transactions, Aris and his sons, would come and importune me for assistance, and the former never failed to aver that he was unjustly sacrificed to popular clamour.

I do not know that the Middlesex Governor was, at that epoch, a worse specimen of his craft than others of his brother functionaries throughout the country, for all our penal establishments were then such sinks of iniquity, that Aris may possibly have been not a whit more guilty than his compeers. However, his accusers prevailed, and he was discarded without provision.

During the agitation that prevailed upon the subject, crowds would assemble without the walls, and the incarcerated—fully acquainted with public occurrences—would shriek and shout in order to keep alive popular sympathy, until stories of cruelties perpetrated within, aroused indignation and invoked redress.

Aris would dilate to me upon the hardships of his position, and, certainly, as far as the cries indicated maltreatment, I can myself testify that, *per se*, they established no proof whatever against him or others.

I had reason to know, thereafter, how lustily the refractory (especially, outrageous women) would gratuitously exercise their lungs, with

the artful intention to proclaim imaginary wrongs; so that the cries of the 'Bastile,' may possibly have been of the same spontaneous, but groundless character. Still, there could be no doubt whatever of the infamous management which had long disgraced the gaol, for I have seen a *brochure* of those times (of which a copy, I believe, is still preserved at the Sessions House) written expressly to demonstrate the iniquity then prevalent within those walls.

The brochure in question has a title in the form of an interrogatory of the coarsest nature; unfit, indeed, for ears polite, but still sufficiently intelligible as to the character of that 'Penitentiary,' and the scenes enacted therein, to stamp it as a focus of abomination and impurity, thus rudely denounced.

The thieves of the present day still retain for the name of the prison at Cold Bath Fields, a portion of the appellation which bygone agitation had conferred upon it. As an omnibus is familiarly styled a 'bus,' so is the word Bastile abbreviated into 'stile,' pronounced 'steel.' Consequently, as often as I was seen, and openly recognized in the street, I was

hailed by professional thieves as 'the governor of the *stile*.' There was likewise a distinctive name prevalent amongst the same class for every prison in the metropolis, and thus, the New Prison at Clerkenwell was styled 'The Wells:' Newgate, the 'Stone Jug:' Horse-monger-Lane, 'The Old Horse:' and Tothill Fields, 'The Tea Garden.'

The Prison became successively entrusted to the management of Governors Adkins and Vickery—both of them having previously been distinguished as expert police officers. A notion prevailed in that day that none but police magistrates and their satellites were competent to cope with public plunderers, and, consequently, the county magistrates were accustomed to delegate to their brethren of the police, the selection of the governors of the prisons, as often as vacancies occurred. At that period the police magistrates, at the several sessions, exercised co-ordinate jurisdiction with the justices of the county, and the former sedulously upheld the doctrine, subsequently epitomised, "that none but a thief-taker should be a thief-keeper."

There is no earthly doubt that these privileged functionaries, the thief-taking governors, held that their primary obligation consisted in feathering their own nests, and at the same time enriching their subordinates. All their arrangements seemed designed to promote personal privileges, and to amass unlimited gains.

At that period, there did not exist a more neglected or outraged class than the criminals in our numerous gaols. The philanthropy of the great Howard appeared to have become extinct, and to have died with him; while the after exertions of Sir George Paul were circumscribed, and seemed to produce no lasting effect. Acts of Parliament, designed to purify the prison system, and to regulate the treatment of the criminal, had been utterly disregarded, and for many years subsequent to their enactment remained a dead letter. Thus the 19th Geo. III., Cap. 74—22nd Geo. III., Cap. 64—31st Geo. III., Cap 46., became, under general indifference, powerless to amend a corrupt system. As far as the county of Middlesex was concerned, no care



whatever was bestowed upon the prisons, and consequently vicious administrators were left to perpetrate their corrupt devices.

I do not, for a moment, believe that this indifference resulted from inhumanity, or a lack of Christian sympathy with transgressors. There existed, almost universally, an implied conviction that the outcasts of society were inaccessible to kindly influences—that they constituted an exclusive race, fenced around with ferocity, and untameable anti-social instincts of every kind—that care for their condition would be superfluous, and hopes of any possible amendment nugatory. These unhappy beings were therefore incarcerated, and consigned to the tender mercies of a system based on self-aggrandizement and fraud.

The late Mrs. Fry, with a heart full of charity and an intellectual vigour rarely met with, was the first, amid such culpable and barbarous indifference, to extend her generous care and solicitude towards the forsaken criminal; and that inestimable lady became duly seconded in her holy task—first, by members of her own family, and, in time, by heroic co-

adjutors of her own sex, who had the courage to confront so dark and dismal a den as Newgate exhibited in those days.

There, were found congregated hosts of unfortunate creatures, who, condemned by the merciless laws then existent, were actually under "sentence of *death*," for trifling larcenies which, at this moment, would be appeased by a week's imprisonment. I full well remember, as doubtless do many others now living, the shock occasioned by my first visit to the Old Bailey — where miserable objects, one after the other, heard the doom of "*death*" pronounced upon them, on conviction, for stealing a sheet or an old blanket, or some article equally worthless. Our prisons presented the offshoots of such savage laws, when Mrs. Fry first let in the light of mercy upon those wretched captives, and attempted to kindle in their callous hearts some humanizing impulses.

The Samaritan labours of that noble woman awakened a corresponding devotion in her brother-in-law, the late Mr. Samuel Hoare, who, as a Middlesex magistrate, became a

visitor of the prison at Cold Bath Fields. It was long before he, and others who zealously seconded his efforts, could make much, or, indeed, any progress in their benevolent designs. Not only was corruption deep-rooted and all-pervading, but these pioneers in prison discipline themselves possessed but crude notions of what could be effected. They hoped to suppress some of the grosser iniquities existing in our gaols; but the unsuitableness of the buildings, the increasing numbers crowded into them, and the sort of fabulous veil that overshadowed the characteristics, and obscured the corrigibility of thieves, seemed to render anything akin to modern discipline inconceivable—or, had it been conceived, impracticable.

This wide-spread estimate of the hopeless intractability of the criminal classes was, doubtless, strengthened by the nature of the then existing police organization. There existed no effective means to coerce or overawe the violence of thieves. Lawless bodies combined to retaliate upon those who, when plundered, presumed to seek redress by prosecu-

tion. There was no security against the revenge of organized fraternities—a fact sufficiently demonstrated by the case of Mr. Fuller, a surgeon of Bethnal-green.

That gentleman was, in open day, robbed of his watch. He pursued and overtook the thief, and, in due time, prosecuted and convicted him. For that act of temerity, he was marked, denounced, and pursued. He was the subject of incessant violence; often narrowly escaped death at the hands of those miscreants; and, in spite of all his importunities at the Home-office, and at Bow-street, for protection—which they had not the power to afford him—he was compelled to relinquish a lucrative practice, and to abandon the neighbourhood, in order to preserve his life.

I received from his own lips the recital of his persecution and sufferings, simply for having acted in individual defence, and in behalf of social duty.

As a specimen of what this victim of lawless combination had had to endure, it is only needful to recite one of the many facts which he related. He was aroused one night from

sleep, by the ringing of his night-bell, and on opening the window to ascertain the cause, a sledge-hammer fell with crushing effect upon the sill. Providentially, Mr. Fuller evaded the blow, and the villains promptly withdrew a ladder, which they had erected against the house to effect their murderous purpose, and decamped.

He affirmed, that his numerous applications at Bow-street, to secure the protection he required for his very existence, at length entailed upon him the insults of the late Sir Richard Birnie, who rebuffed him with the most unfeeling contumely. Mr. Fuller concluded his narration in these touching terms : — “ You see, sir, my attenuated form. I was a man of robust constitution, and in a thriving practice ; my health has been ruined, and my interests sacrificed by a conspiracy against my safety and my life, simply for performing an act of duty ; and in this civilized country even the state could afford me no protection.”

Other instances might be cited, of a similar character ; and that of Mr. Edge, an aged gentleman, of Essex-street, Strand, whose

house had been burglariously entered, is scarcely less afflicting.

The staff of the police-‘offices’ was quite *sui generis* — pretentious, mysterious, and costly, whenever called into requisition. They were known to perform their cleverest feats by collusion with the thieves themselves, whom they paid, or favoured by their connivance. The old watchmen, jocosely denominated ‘Charlies,’ exhibited a remarkable incorporation of physical feebleness and mental imbecility. The daring young and muscular thieves of the metropolis, adepts in stratagem, held them in contempt; and thus, between the two orders of conservators of the peace, something not far removed from impunity stalked abroad, and rendered life and property insecure.

In such a state of things, the late Sir Robert Peel, regardless of vulgar and ignorant clamour, instituted the New Police Force, and thus established a lasting security, at any rate, against the brutal domination of public plunderers, which had so long terrified the community.

After the foregoing review, it is not, perhaps, surprising that the ferocity exhibited by criminals, both within the walls of a prison and when at large, should have created some doubt in the minds of philanthropic but not over-adventurous men, as to the practicability of subduing and guiding congregated hosts of lawless ruffians. I know that those misgivings *did* exist in benevolent minds, bent upon reform and amelioration ; and that, for a time, they prevailed. Still, there was an earnestness in the inquiries secretly pursued, and an abhorrence of the unprincipled spoliation practised by the officials, which such inquiries disclosed, that by degrees, a stern conviction arose, that all was wrong, and that strong measures must be resorted to to stem the torrent of abuses.

In this condition of circumstances, when the mismanagement of the prison was no longer questionable, and whispers to the Governor's disparagement became rife—occurrences suddenly transpired, which startled the Bench, and suggested measures, strenuously adopted by a few leading magis-

trates, which were destined, ere long, to change the whole aspect of affairs within those walls, and progressively to foster a spirit of improvement.



## CHAPTER III.

PRISON REFORMERS—COINCIDENT EVENTS, AND  
ULTIMATE RESULTS.

THE late Mr. Samuel Hoare, was a man of pure and benevolent character—indefatigable, earnest, and sincere, but withal extremely cautious. His motives, however, were fully appreciated. They were beyond all suspicion ; and his benignant designs won for him the confidence and co-operation of several distinguished members of the Bench. Mr. Hoare, consequently, became the guiding instrument in all the steps necessary to accomplish the reform of the prison. In the Committee of Visitors, he was all but perpetual

chairman—simply retiring at periodical intervals, in conformity with the regulations of the court—but assuredly, when eligible, re-elected, and invested with the authority which his high and honourable character, and exalted philanthropy had gained for him. When out of office, by rotation, he was still consulted, and his approval secured the adoption of every proposition made in his absence.

The chaplain, at that time, of Cold Bath Fields House of Correction, was the late Rev. John Ousby, whose Evangelical tenets were quite in accordance with those of Mr. Hoare. Hence, a bond of union, which fortified mutual reliance. Mr. Ousby, from his position, became cognizant of much that was enacting within the circle of his cure, and his honest, though erratic nature (for he presented a strange compound of wild religious enthusiasm and solid practical usefulness) was shocked by the consciousness that corruption defiled the whole establishment.

All the mal-practices that came to his knowledge were imparted to Mr. Hoare, and those two zealous reformers, in the best sense of the

term, took counsel together, and planned the course of action best suited to the circumstances of the case. Mr. Ousby was the bolder of the two, but secresy and caution were the tactics enjoined by Mr. Hoare, and the chaplain naturally deferred to his opinion.

I was, at that period, reading with Mr. Ousby, with a view to ordination, and heard him dilate upon the transactions of the prison, without the remotest suspicion that I should ever become interested in their development.

Just at this moment, two prisoners effected their escape from Cold Bath Fields, under circumstances which disclosed such utter want of sage precautions, that the governor, Mr. Vickery, thereby became seriously compromised. At the ensuing sessional meeting, when the prison report was under consideration, and the details of the escape were set forth, there arose against the governor, grave charges of neglect, mal-administration, and incompetence, and he was unsparingly assailed by the leading magistrates, who countenanced the ameliorating projects of Mr. Hoare.

At that identical period there existed va-

rious anomalies in the administration of the county affairs, and a league composed of some seven or eight magistrates of influence, from their position in society, essayed to discard abuses matured by time, which required vigorous hands to prune or to uproot. The leader in this salutary movement was the late Sir Albert—then, Mr. Serjeant Pell, who equally zealous and bold, applied his oratorical powers (which were of no mean order) to the exposition and denunciation of all that vitiated the county system.

He it was, therefore, who assumed the lead on this occasion, and he assailed with unsparing severity the facts which had been elicited detrimental to the prison management, and seized the recent escape, in particular, as a base whereon to found his after-propositions. He, therefore, openly declared that Mr. Vickery must resign his office, or that steps would be taken to expel him from it.

Mr. Vickery cowered beneath this storm of reproaches, and expressed his willingness to resign, thereby becoming pretty secure of a retiring allowance.

At this crisis, Mr. Serjeant Pell addressed the court in terms of earnest expostulation, and deprecated the practice of selecting a police-officer for so responsible a post. "You have made a grave mistake," said he; "you have chosen for that position men whose preceding life has unfitted them to exercise command, or to conciliate respect. They possess neither the ability to fulfil the complicated functions of the office, nor the moral influence to sustain the requisite authority in it."

He then proceeded to describe the class distinguished by fitting qualifications, and expressed the opinion that a military or naval officer, who was at the same time a man of education and reputed ability, possessing a competent knowledge of business, might be found equal to the task; and he implored the court to depart from a mode of selection which had hitherto worked so ill. This suggestion was approved by the leading county magistrates, but it was virulently denounced by the police magistrates (with a few honourable exceptions) who perceived in this innovation the extinction of their antecedent patronage.

The late Mr. Byng—so long M.P. for the county—carried his zeal in this reformatory scheme so far as to lead him to enquire at the Horse Guards, if the authorities there could recommend a *field-officer*, willing to fill the post ; at that epoch a novel charge for a gentleman.

I heard Mr. Byng's explanation of the step he had taken, on the ensuing court day, and he excited some mirth by relating the very naïve question of the adjutant-general—"Do you propose to invest us with the appointment, or must any officer we might name, submit to a canvass? If the former be your plan," said the adjutant-general, "I will endeavour to assist the magistrates, but if the latter, I decline to do so."

If the magistrates had thought fit to transfer their right of selection to the adjutant-general, I have no doubt he would easily have found a field-officer willing to accept the appointment, since Mr. Serjeant Pell had already given notice that he should move at the ensuing 'county day,' the augmentation of the salary from the then-existing amount of £400

per annum, to £600. Such an income, together with a good residence free of rent and taxes, would unquestionably have tempted many a military man to forego "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war," in order to grasp a stipend all but inaccessible to military aspiration.

My connection with the county of Middlesex, and the House of Correction at Cold Bath Fields, was fortuitously effected in the following manner: I had seen some few years of military service in a department of the royal artillery, and had subsequently borne arms in a British regiment embodied and transplanted to South America, to aid the state of Colombia in its war of emancipation from the dominion of Spain. In this latter enterprise I had encountered severe hardships, and had failed to realize any of the benefits so profusely promised, in order to secure external assistance; and I had returned to England with impaired health and impoverished means.

I was engaged in various civil pursuits, and had, at length, under advice, determined to seek holy orders, and for that purpose, I had

been reading with Mr. Ousby. That reverend gentleman chanced to have been present in the court at Clerkenwell, where he had listened to the reasoning of Mr. Serjeant Pell, and he forthwith did me the honour to conceive, as he avowed to me, that I was the man, in whom, according to his judgment, the qualities defined by Mr. Serjeant Pell were concentrated ; and he hastily determined to urge me to make the requisite efforts to secure the vacant appointment.

Consequently, early one morning in the month of March. 1829, when I was busily employed over Greek exercises, I received an unlooked-for visit from Mr. Ousby, who suddenly surprised me by the jocosé exclamation, "I am come to drag you to prison." A short explanation sufficed to detail his errand ; but at the first blush of the proposal, I expressed a decided repugnance to it. It differed so completely from my adopted scheme, and seemed to me so hopeless of realization, that I instantly repudiated the idea, pleading my ignorance of prisons, utter want of acquaintance with magistrates, and lack of any kind of



interest in the requisite quarter. However, Mr. Ousby's reasoning prevailed, and I also took counsel from others, who encouraged me in the attempt. Notwithstanding, therefore, the opposition of numerous competitors, the combined action of the *county*, in contradistinction to the *police*, magistrates prevailed, and on the 23rd of July, 1829, I was elected by a large majority of votes. Moreover, just preceding the declaration of the poll, the motion of Mr. Serjeant Pell, for the augmentation of the salary, had been carried affirmatively, and this increase was distinctly recognized as a means whereby the position of a gentleman might be the better sustained.

## CHAPTER IV.

## ABUSES—ILLICIT GAINS OF OFFICERS AND PRISONERS.

ON the 27th of July, 1829, I made my *debüt* in the prison, and received from the Visiting Justices the charge of it. I experienced from the prison officers every demonstration of external respect, although I afterwards learned, they archly indulged in winks and smiles, derided my pretensions to rule the place, and declared they would be a match for me in astuteness. Those men had received with the utmost astonishment, the intelligence of the selection of the Court, for they devoutly believed in the police axiom, that none but a police officer could be endowed with the requi-

site capability to exercise so unusually complex and distinctive a command. The preference shown to a man heretofore ignorant of criminal data, to the exclusion of Plank, a chief police officer, was past their comprehension; and all sorts of sinister predictions were hazarded as to the inevitable consequences of so mad an experiment. Such was the estimate formed of my appointment, by those interested sceptics.

I found the inmates to number 790, and the building of quadrangular form, divided by a central passage, of very contracted dimensions, intersected at right angles by other passages equally narrow. The centre passage was guarded by four sets of folding iron-barred gates, to protect the entrance from every approach to it, while the chapel (certainly the least secure quarter in the whole structure) was overcharged with massive iron defences, and revealed the secret of a ceaseless apprehension of violence, and the only reliable safeguard of a barbarian age—viz., sternly resisting bars and bolts. Moral influences had been quite unthought of.

The irons then in use for bodily restraint, were of the like ponderous character, and their pattern still remains suspended, as an emblematical device, outside the huge entrance gates. They were, doubtless, originally designed, and there set up, as a warning exhibition to the public.

The cells numbered 232, and those allotted to male convicts each contained at night three occupants. In various parts of the building were rooms of unsuitable size and construction, which, as necessity required, could be used as dormitories; and there was also a large detached wooden shed, appropriated to vagrants, so ill ventilated, filthy, and foetid, as to prove unendurable to any decent person.

The female side was a portion imperfectly fenced off from the males' compartment of the large quadrangle, and an after leisurely contemplation of that part of the arrangement, convinced me that such imperfect separation was not made without an infamous intent.

Every fresh day's experience tended more clearly to unveil the real character of the

prison. It was a sink of abomination and pollution; and so close was the combination amongst its corrupt functionaries, and so subtle were their *finesse* and contrivances, that, in process of time, I discovered that neither Mr. Hoare, nor any of his magisterial friends, nor even the chaplain himself, with all his persevering researches, had acquired any definite notion of the wide-spread defilement that polluted every hole and corner of that Augean stable. There was scarcely one redeeming feature in the prison administration, but the whole machinery tended to promote shameless gains by the furtherance of all that was lawless and execrable.

As a novice, I stood abashed by the singular difficulties of my position, but I soon understood that my best policy was—at this early stage—to scan the intricacies of the building, and next, by quiet observation, to glean all the information in my power from the daily routine, and from casual occurrences. Two things struck me with surprise: first, the chief warder's custom to move about at minimum when he did move, and to sit in the

court-yard the greater part of the day, swinging backwards and forwards in a chair, with the most impassible *nonchalance*. Whereas, that officer ought, unquestionably, to have been as smart, active, and vigilant as a serjeant-major. In the second place, the matron (widow of the late Governor Adkins, who had preceded Vickery) was most loquaciously self-laudatory, and so vaunted the superiority of her management, that I could not fail to perceive she sought to extinguish my critical desire to sift and discern for myself, and designed to lull me into the belief that her charge was so administered as to constitute a model for imitation.

Each 'turnkey' had a fixed locality, and was the supervisor of a 'yard' containing from 70 to 100 prisoners, while every yard contained a 'yardsman,' i.e. a prisoner who could afford to bid the highest price for acting as deputy-turnkey, and, under his superior, to trade with the prisoners at a stupendous rate of profit to his principal and to himself. Prisoners also occupied the lucrative posts of 'nurses' in the infirmary, while those of 'pas-

sage-men,' and other still more subordinate capacities, procurable by money, all tended to enrich the officers and these select prisoners at one and the same time. The latter, moreover, by those illicit indulgencies, evaded the imposition of their sentences, and passed their time in comparative ease and comfort, with the additional prospect of ultimately quitting the prison enriched by an extortionate commerce with its convicted inmates.

Rules existed prohibitory of unauthorized indulgencies. The theory was penal and restrictive, while the practice was an utter contempt for all restraint upon the will and wishes of those who had money. From one end of the prison to the other, there existed, consequently, a vast illicit commerce at an exorbitant rate of profit. Nor was that all, for spoliation and trickery were practised upon the uninitiated, who were mercilessly defrauded in every transaction with such rapacious traders.

The first question addressed to a prisoner on his arrival, was, "had he money, or aught convertible into money, or would any friend, if apprized of its utility, supply him with money."

If the reply were affirmative, the turnkey, or some agent of his, would convey a letter for the requisite contribution, which became subject to the unconscionable deduction from every pound sterling transmitted of seven or eight shillings, with a couple of shillings to the 'yardsman,' and, in many instances, an additional shilling to the 'passage-man.' Parcels containing clothes, or supplies of any sort in kind, were opened and despoiled of most of their contents ; and happy was the novice who secured anything whatever, which had once been confided to the hands of those remorseless men.

The poor and friendless prisoner was a man wretchedly maltreated and oppressed. Every species of degrading employment was thrust upon him, and daily inflictions rendered his existence hardly supportable. If he dared openly to repine, he was loaded with the coarsest abuse ; but if he presumed to complain, the most inhuman retaliation awaited him. He was called 'a nose,' and was made to run the gauntlet through a double file of scoundrels armed with short ropes or knotted handkerchiefs ; and, should such discipline



fail to subdue his contumacy, he would be scarcely safe from mortal injury at the hands of his savage oppressors.

And here the late governor appears to have been guilty of a culpable negligence, amounting (however unintentionally, for I have been told he was not a man of unkind nature) to positive barbarity. I have been assured by numerous prisoners that he would be seen at the gate of a yard about once in six weeks ; and, upon those rare occasions, he would inquire if any one had a complaint to prefer. Some poor ignorant wretch, unconscious of the folly and hazard of such a step, would come forward to appeal against his treatment ; whereupon the governor would commend his conduct, and promise inquiry and redress. He would then retire, take no further notice of the matter, but leave the ill-fated complainant to the cruel retribution of the enraged miscreants by whom he was surrounded.

The cunning of Lucifer himself was scarcely adequate to detect the wiles and artifices with which all the prison abuses were contrived. In vain might a magistrate penetrate

into the interior, and cast his inquisitive glances around him. Telegraphic signals had announced the presence of an unwelcome visitor, and all was promptly arranged to defeat suspicion. The prisoners would assume an aspect and demeanour at once subdued and respectful; the doors of cells would fly open to disclose clean basements, edged with thick layers of lime-white (deliberately used to conceal secrets hardly divivable)—pipes had been extinguished and safely stowed away—the tread-wheels had been fully manned, and other industrial arts set in motion; while the designing turnkey was found at the head of his class, the very pattern of civility and respectful attention.

No one, however mistrustful, would, in such a cursory inspection, be led for one moment to surmise that the basements of all these cells were hollowed out, and made the depositories of numerous interdicted articles—many of which might justly be termed luxuries. Those layers of lime-white, frequently renewed, hid beneath their surface an inlet to such hidden treasures; and thus, wine, spirits, tea and

coffee, tobacco and pipes, were unsuspectedly stowed away—and even pickles, preserves, and fish-sauce might also frequently be found secreted within those occult receptacles.

That, however, was not all. The very walls separating one cell from another would be adapted to these clandestine uses, and the key to these deposits would be a brick, or perhaps two, easily dislodged by anyone acquainted with the secret, when the hand would dip into a store, which, for its extravagant cost, might be deemed a really precious deposit.

In the midst of all these innovations upon prison regulations, I learned a fact, which not a little surprised me—viz., the liberal supply of money, and articles of comfort, furnished by attached relatives and friends to many of the lowest order of criminals. Indeed, the attention this class of persons pay to each other's wants, constitutes a redeeming trait in the midst of their degenerate habits and pursuits. The extent to which they will send in combs, gloves, flannels, &c., in the present day, and used liberally to supply money in

the bygone times of which I am treating, exceeds credibility. In a like spirit will relatives or companions, all vicious though they be, be found standing for hours in the cold and rain to welcome and succour liberated friends. Some of these affectionate demonstrations are of so touching a nature, that the highest and best members of society might derive from them an example worthy of imitation. For instance, on no very remote occasion, some thirty convicts, sentenced to transportation at the Middlesex sessions, and who had remained imprisoned at Cold Bath Fields until the order for their transference should issue from the Home Office, were about to be removed. I had permitted them, on the preceding day, to write and apprise their friends of their intended departure, and, the following morning, at seven o'clock, the outer gates became thronged with persons interested in the fate of some unhappy cast-away, and who thus sought to snatch a parting look at one who, though lost to society, was still cherished in some desolate heart. Not being able to catch a glimpse of any individual

in the vans, the whole of this anxious crowd ran, with excited eagerness, beside them to the terminus at King's Cross, there to secure a merely momentary sign of recognition from the object in whom each took an affectionate interest. From the general conduct of this outcast race, the one to the other (doubtless with a wide margin for exceptions), the fact may be deduced that 'the stamp of the Deity has not been quite effaced by the trail of the serpent.'

Within the circle of the prison, however, at the period of my first experience, the code of practical operations tended to stifle all the kindly sensibilities of human nature, and to foster whatever was selfish and abhorrent. The simple and confiding prisoner would even be robbed of his daily ration, or induced, by artful contrivances, to pledge the prospective allowances of several days. A vigorous attempt at suicide (which had nearly succeeded) on the part of one starving wretch made me cognizant of that startling fact, and necessitated immediate corrective measures to eradicate so pernicious a practice. If the

result had not proved so nearly fatal, I could have laughed at the *naïveté* with which the poor fellow, just snatched from the jaws of death, described the condition of the selfish brute who would have absorbed his rations. With tears streaming from his eyes, he exclaimed—"While I am a bag of bones, examine him, sir, and you will find him as plump as a lamb!" As severe punishment followed that flagrant offence, his plumpness assuredly became somewhat diminished.

One man who had been a brewer, and stood convicted of a scandalous misdemeanour, possessed such ample funds, that he was indulged with whatever luxury he coveted; and when the whole building became subject to a scrutinizing search, the narrow span-roof of a gallery contained dozens of bottles and jars, which had contained wines and condiments to pamper the appetite of this favoured culprit. When I began at length to enforce in every case the limitation to the apportioned legal dietary, this man's countenance betokened a gravity commensurate with his altered condition, for he had revelled in good cheer.

Here, also, I discovered another *ample* source of profit to those voracious turnkeys. The correspondence of prisoners with their friends was properly defined by an existing regulation, but in this, as in every other particular, rules were nugatory. If, therefore, a prisoner should be too poor to pay one shilling or eighteen-pence for a letter, either written to go out, or for one received in, such letter was invariably destroyed. In short, there was no end to the expedients of such corrupt minds, in order to realize unhallowed gains.

Here let me so far qualify my condemnation of a whole body of men as to admit that there may possibly have been gradations in the scale of rascality, and that some few may not have steeled their hearts altogether against the intrusion of pity. Still, however, such terrible facts came to my knowledge, illustrative of the seared consciences, the heartless rapacity, and the cruel spoliations of so many of those callous officials, that my mind can scarcely exempt any, but the most recently appointed, from the turpitude engendered by the neglect of authority on the one hand, and by unchecked opportunity on

the other. Moreover, be it remembered, the disclosures which then set the seal of infamy upon the prison at Cold Bath Fields, would equally have been elicited by an inquiry into the details of almost every other prison in the kingdom. Such establishments reeked with corruption.



## CHAPTER V.

UNDISCIPLINED CROWDS—CRIMINALITY PATRONIZED  
AND REWARDED.

It is curious now to look back upon the grotesque appearance which a sudden inburst upon any separate division of criminals then presented. As the yard was approached, the ear was assailed with a discordant buzz of voices, occasional singing and whistling, and ever and anon an interjectional shriek. This hubbub proceeded from a heterogeneous mob of persons of all ages, from 16 years and upwards, who were moving about in a confused mass, without supervision, order, or wholesome system of any kind. No sooner was my pre-

sence discerned, than all this din became suddenly stifled, and the yardsman, generally the most subtle villain of the whole lot, would assume an air of solemn serenity, pull off his cap, and bow reverentially, and look the very image of primitive simplicity.

The group, thus inspected, exhibited a motley intermixture of forms and costumes. Some were wholly clothed in the prison garb, others wore a portion only of that attire, while, perhaps, one-half of the division retained their own clothes, however tattered or unseemly they might be. The rule which regulated the distribution of vestments seemed perfectly capricious and undefinable. The muster of hands was conducted in so slovenly a manner as to afford no security whatever that all were present; and when I expostulated with a turnkey named Robinson, for affecting to count his prisoners by a method which defied correctness, he replied, tartly, "It was useless to hope to please me, since I was bent upon finding fault."

The yardsmen—some seven or eight in number—displayed divers characteristics; but

whatever the diversity, no one was fitted for the post he had purchased unless he should possess a stern and fearless temperament, a discriminating eye, and an elastic conscience. I shall content myself with giving an outline of the career and qualities of three of the number ; premising that I am now speaking of the male side of the prison.

R. P., aged about 26 years, was the son of a humble but respectable country tradesman. The young man had embraced the desperate calling of a highwayman, had acquired shameful notoriety, and was long the terror of the western road. How it chanced that, under his present conviction, he had evaded transportation, I know not ; but there he was, in that House of Correction, with two companions, under a lengthened sentence of imprisonment. He was a man of comely appearance, of a fine athletic form, and one whose address was decidedly good. I never knew an individual whose external demeanour was more calculated to beguile, for he was, in outward aspect, respectful, sedate, and of almost refined comportment. In short, his general bearing would

seem to indicate an excess of meekness and submission. It only needed an adequate excitement to call forth his native ferocity—and it was not long before circumstances elicited the display.

Information reached me that R. P. had, by some stratagem, become possessed of several pieces of gold, and he was accordingly taxed with secreting them. The most solemn denial did not prevent a personal search, and, that failing, his cell and bedding were subjected to a strict examination; when, lo! the treasure was discovered.

My sentence to deprive him of his post of yardsman, and consign him to the treadmill, was the signal for a perfect hurricane of oaths, imprecations, and every form of invective. His muscular capacity—expanding simultaneously with his unbridled temper—seemed about to develope itself in overt force, and he assumed a posture of feigned resistance; which, however, he was too wily actually to adopt. By this unlooked-for incident, the relentless bully stood unmasked; and some notion might thus be formed of the well-

founded terror of the benighted traveller who might be suddenly assailed by so sturdy a foot-pad.

This species of ruffian rarely possesses the patient courage to brave a protracted term of solitary confinement on bread and water ; and the three days' punishment inflicted on R. P. so effectually curbed his unruly spirit, that thenceforth his conduct in the prison was marked by unexceptionable propriety. Strange to say, that young man, providentially, renounced his desperate courses, followed his father's occupation, and, many years after the transactions I have recorded, I heard of him as an industrious and thriving tradesman. This transformation is the more remarkable, since men, who early display such evil propensities, are rarely known to reform.

Yardsman I. S. was well known on the confines of Essex, as a midnight marauder, who, when it suited his purpose, paid but little respect to locks and bolts. He was accustomed to drive a light cart, drawn by a fleet horse ; and, thus equipped, he simulated the calling of pig-dealer. His real occupation, however,

was that of plunder; and, associated with men of refined cunning, he had long pursued a course of crime with impunity. One of his companions, although an unusually expert carpenter, was a most accomplished trickster. At length, I. S., and two others, were detected in the perpetration of an audacious night robbery, and the three were convicted and sentenced to undergo two years' imprisonment with hard labour.

I. S., although a finished rogue and hypocrite, was quite of a different stamp from my preceding subject, R. P. He was a man of plausible speech, who could at pleasure wear a most deceptive countenance, and assume an air of general persuasiveness. The more strongly and wilfully he lied, the more specious and, seemingly truthful was his demeanour. Catch him in the perpetration of any forbidden act, and, with the coolest effrontery, he would essay to swear you out of your very consciousness. This man gained so complete an ascendancy over his turnkey, that the latter became passive in his pliant hands, and swore "he loved I. S. as a brother."

At length, I became so thoroughly convinced of his pernicious influence as a yardsman, that simply as a matter of safe precaution, I removed him. Instead of resenting his disgrace, he had the policy, thenceforth, to extend a marked deference to every order, or even suggestion of mine, and thus, in time, by sheer civil behaviour, he was again elevated to a position of unbought trust, which, at that time, prisoners were allowed to fill.

While sagaciously conforming to inevitable circumstances, and meriting general approval by his patient obedience, he unhappily caught a fever and died. I must, however, be sufficiently candid—some may say uncharitable—to aver that I never cherished any expectation whatever, of his genuine reform. He was one of those smooth, oily, subtle tactitians, who astutely discerned his own interest; to secure which, he would have betrayed and sacrificed every other fellow-scoundrel within the circle of his influence.

The third yardsman of note, was a fellow named B——, who was undergoing a sentence of one year's imprisonment for fraud. He was

a *soi-disant* 'gentleman,' had never been clothed in the prison dress—and his appearance really bore the stamp of gentility. He was one of those flash, presumptuous, conscienceless adventurers, who abound in London, and are significantly denominated 'swindlers.' Great command of countenance, rare *finesse*, and unblushing hardihood, are essential to the successful machinations of this dangerous clique, who, by the way, are rarely so awkward in their manœuvres as to risk detection. When they do perform a clever feat, it is usually to some large amount, and under the guise of a civil contract debt. There are associated gangs of these tricksters, who maintain offices for the purpose of fictitious reference, and in other respects, plant their traps so adroitly, that few traders are sufficiently wary to elude the snare.

My present subject, B——, was one of this class of cheats, and he possessed all the requisite qualifications to sustain his vocation. He had been tried and sentenced in the Court of King's Bench, and he craftily assumed a dignity based upon the superior tribunal by



which he had been condemned. He was for ever vaunting this notable distinction, which fully succeeded in misleading the ignorant crowd around him, whereas, that superior court had adjudged him to suffer penal, in preference to mere civil restrictions, in consideration of the pre-eminent craft and subtilty of his rascality.

This man was a perfect adept in effrontery. Nothing could possibly surpass his cool, and barefaced impudence ; nor could I, at any time, discover in him the slightest tincture of fear or timidity. For a season, he resorted to the artful expedient of superfluous deference ; but finding that *ruse* unsuccessful, he reversed his tactics, and, assuming a bold and confident demeanour, bearded me with a fierceness and daring, which extorted from me a certain amount of respect for the fellow's courage. His education had not been neglected, and in his own defence he was fluent, nay, almost eloquent.

In the course of my contest with this varlet, I failed altogether to subdue his arrogance, and, strange to say, I felt an undefinable re-

luctance to visit his offences with the dark cell. He had been sentenced to imprisonment, but without the imposition of hard labour, and he had purchased his post of yardsman in the division allotted to those prisoners, equally with himself, exempt from labour—a class which, at that period, passed their time in utter idleness.

I deprived him of the office of yardsman, and the occasion was sufficiently memorable, for, when I sought to replace him, I could not find, out of one hundred persons, one individual adequately instructed to be able to write upon a slate. The schoolmaster of that day had been sparingly abroad.

I was perfectly astonished at the experience I here gained of the surpassing influence that fellow B—— succeeded in acquiring over his ignorant associates. As yardsman, he was tyrannical, and exorbitant in his exactions—some instances, indeed, were scarcely tolerable, and yet he had the tact to guide and control that mindless herd, in spite of all my efforts to suppress abuses for their own especial benefit. By his loud voice, brazen face, and

impudent assumption, he imposed upon their credulity, and secured a general adhesion to his exposition of their 'common law rights;' such was his own term. At length, on quitting the prison, he menaced me with every sort of legal process, and I was too young in office to discard all apprehensions of legal entanglement.

From the synopsis I have presented of the office of yardsman—its privileges, immunities, and emoluments, together with the abandoned characters of its occupants, some notion may be formed of the way in which justice was frustrated, and infamy encouraged and rewarded in those days of misrule. The prison presented no terror whatever to monied delinquents, who entered it with a smile of complacency, quite alien from the outward demonstration it was the original design to create. On the female side the same unjustifiable selection prevailed, and the 'yardswoman' was, if possible, a worse sample of infamy than any I have yet exhibited.

The principal ward, on that side, was disgraced by such encouragement to a woman

named Elizabeth Harris, who had then nearly completed one year's imprisonment, for having violated public decency, by maintaining a house of ill-fame of the very worst description.

Possessed of a fine symmetrical form, a countenance of the rarest beauty, and capable of assuming manners singularly attractive, Elizabeth Harris concealed beneath these unusual fascinations, an abandoned licentiousness of mind and character. Her antecedent career, as well as her conduct in the prison, marked her as a shameless and profligate woman, who had exceeded most other outcasts of her sex in the reckless impurity of her life. Without one spark of decency herself, she delighted in the contamination of all around her, and was one of those supremely vicious creatures who aspired to nothing apart from the most debasing sensuality. Nor were these bad qualities redeemed by any touch of pity. It came to my knowledge (just on the eve of her release from prison) that Elizabeth Harris had instigated and been the prime actress in a shocking outrage upon an unhappy girl, less guilty than her criminal associates,

who had been selected as the object of their brutal sport, by the comparative innocency of her character.

If it were possible to narrate the particulars of that refined atrocity, I question if the virtuous<sup>s</sup> portion of the female world would credit the relation—so far did it transcend in cruelty and abomination anything the most unclean and inventive imagination could suggest. Such was the wretch who was thus enabled to defraud public justice within the very sanctuary as it were, of the laws, and to become pre-eminent, by purchase, above all profligates, as an instructress of whatever was vile and libidinous.

## CHAPTER VI.

REMARKABLE TRAITS OF FEMALE CHARACTER—AN  
IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

ON the occasion of my first visit to the female side of the prison, the scene which I witnessed was calculated to create a good impression. I had been expected, and, consequently, there was a studied arrangement, and a decorum which seemed to indicate a judicious system of control. I was ushered into a yard occupied by 'the long fines:' *i.e.*, those prisoners who had to fulfil lengthened sentences. The measurement of this division of the prison was about 60 feet long by 20 broad, and a curve in the order of muster, enabled some sixty

females of various ages—but the majority decidedly young—to be ranged in single file. As I entered, they all curtsied in the most respectful manner, and with a nice precision, and I became favourably impressed with the scene before me. . The principal part were clothed in the prison dress, consisting of a body and skirt of coarse blue cloth, a common blue plaid neckerchief, and a plain white cap tied under the chin. The perfect silence of the group, the stedfast countenances, respectful salutation, and affected meekness of the entire body, were calculated to lull me into the belief that there stood arrayed before me the very concentration of gentleness and tractability. Nothing, however, could be more fallacious than such a supposition, nor was I allowed to remain many days under so pleasing a delusion. Upon this occasion I cast my eyes, for the first time, upon a selection of the choicest specimens of turbulence, pugnacity, and hardihood, that the *canaille* of London could claim as its own.

It would be a needless consideration, and an utter waste of delicacy, to affect to disguise

their names, or to designate them by initials. Their salient reputations stood confessed, and rendered all such punctilio superfluous. I will venture, therefore, upon a slight description of the more remarkable amongst this strange company.

First, there was 'Bet Ward,' a young woman of real Amazonian form and stature, and of distinguished beauty. She was one of a stamp rarely exceeded in whatever constituted strength and symmetry. The spoilt child of a weak mother (who still doated on her), she had been consigned to ruin by false indulgence. Equally irascible and fearless, she was the terror of the female officials; but, as she possessed a somewhat generous disposition, she was not wont to carry her violence to a very dangerous extent. B. W. was the first to assail me with vituperative language, and to indicate that she might be disposed to pay but little respect to the person of the governor. I therefore observed a cautious distance whenever I perceived her ire to become ascendant. A few years sufficed to see this once fine young woman enter the prison the mere



wreck of what she originally had been. With withered features, and failing power, she exhibited the sure inroads of a licentious life, coupled with habitual drunkenness—its usual concomitant. The pride and fire of her eye were gone, and deep dejection occupied their place. From that time forth I saw her no more, and doubt not she fell an early sacrifice to a life of vice.

‘Mary Barry’ was also a young woman of great muscular strength, but possessing none of the rare beauty of Bet Ward. She was equal to any audacious enterprise, and would confront the male officers (who were sent to the aid of authority, on occasions of an *emeute*) with the rage and fierceness of a tigress. In a memorable encounter it took six men to overpower her, and one of the number had cause to remember her resistance for many after days, so severely was he bruised. It is strange that a singular admixture should be noticeable in dispositions so apparently untameable, but these wayward creatures had become thus impulsive by the unchecked sway of temper in early life. I once administered to Mary Barry

a gentle reproof for some casual fault, and, being in a docile mood, she hung down her head and coloured deeply. Such a casual trait denoted some latent gentleness, which, in one so vitiated, it would have required too much pains and devotion, in the most persevering Samaritan, to have fanned into mature fruitfulness. A subsequent sentence of transportation severed Mary Barry from my further observation.

There was a remarkable woman in this ward also, whose real name was Sullivan, but who was known by the appellation of 'Slasher.' She was Irish—resided, when free, in St. Giles's, and cohabited with a pugilist. Slasher also was tall and of powerful build, and had acquired her sobriquet from the aptitude she displayed in the 'art of self-defence.' A pitched battle was no unusual interlude in her course, when excited by drink; and, upon such occasions, her attitude and tactics were said to be of the most approved order. In prison, and debarred from spirituous liquor, she was the very type of peacefulness. This poor creature sank prematurely under the

mortal blight of drunkenness—bequeathing to our frequent care a younger sister, who resembled the elder in all respects but in her pugilistic celebrity.

Behold another Irish female athlete, in the person of 'Mary Moriarty,' whose sturdy shape and physical prowess had made her most formidable to the watchmen and streetkeepers of St. Giles's, and its purlieus. Drunkenness and violence frequently consigned her to the prison, where she had long been my dread and torment ere I became cognizant of her redeeming qualities. If ever she chanced to be casually reprov'd, she would abandon herself to a boundless paroxysm of rage. She cared not whom she assailed, nor what she demolished; and it behoved everyone, who valued either his features or his garments, discreetly to stand aloof. She never could be consigned to du-rance before she had fought desperately, and exhausted every imaginary phase of attack upon a host of male turnkeys.

So excessive was her fury, that it was impossible to witness her savage efforts at resistance without feelings of horror and disgust;

and until she was manacled, and thus rendered powerless, it would have been madness to attempt any other expostulation than that implied by force.

One day, however, when she had been fast bound, and exhaustion had tended to subdue her reckless spirit, I approached and addressed her in terms of kindly remonstrance, expressing at the same time the pain with which I contemplated the necessity of measures thus severe against a woman. A sigh and a tear soon evinced the efficacy of my appeal; and, seizing the favourable moment, I ordered her to be at once unbound; and a perfect understanding seemed suddenly to spring up between us. From that time forth my expostulatory voice would soothe and dispel her rising anger, and render her perfectly tractable; and many were the occasions on which my gentle warning sufficed to dissipate the clouds gathering on her brows portending a tempestuous outburst of wrath.

This unhappy girl was warm-hearted and generous to a fault, but of an excitable temperament, which, uncontrolled, or misdirected

by weak and vicious parents, had made her the victim of ungovernable impulses. I once sent an officer to make some enquiry in the very heart of St. Giles's (at that time a most dangerous spot to invade), and when he was surrounded by a crowd of ruffians, who threatened him with violence, Mary Moriarty (then happily free) flew to his rescue, and, by the joint agency of threats, strength, and the influence she exercised over that low mob, she protected him from harm, and successfully covered his retreat. This she had done for my sake, and I am persuaded she would have risked her very life for my personal protection—simply from a grateful sense of my goodwill towards her. She, like all such unhappy outcasts, died prematurely under the scourge of the vile debauchery which pollutes such dens of infamy as St. Giles, and other similar localities.

Amongst the same heterogeneous group was a widow, about thirty-five years of age, who had assumed the name of Eliza Ellams. She was of respectable parentage, and of decent education ; but had discarded all respectability

by her uncontrollable habits of intemperance. At times she would express deep contrition for her faults, and profess a desire to reform. In one of these penitential moods, she prevailed upon the chaplain to interpose with her father in her behalf; and, by this interposition, his condition, and her real circumstances, became known to us. This disclosure presented one of my earliest insights into the all-absorbing, and scarcely credible influence of the passion for ardent spirits; and after-experience taught me the utter hopelessness of reform (especially in the female character), when once that accursed craving had assumed a chronic form. No earthly consideration would seem equal to arrest the mastery of that unappeasable vice. In its vortex, every moral and social obligation becomes alike engulfed. The comforts of home, the advantages of station, or the sanctity of kindred—even of maternal ties—prove insufficient barriers against the inroads of that fatal thirst. It drowns all reflection, and plunges its willing votary into any excess of crime and dishonour for its own insatiate gratification.

The father of Eliza Ellams proved to have

been a joint owner and master of a merchant vessel. He had realized an ample competency, and occupied a genteel residence near the Commercial-road, where he was educating his granddaughter (this wretched woman's child), who was then about seventeen years of age, and was receiving the instruction suited to a young lady. The chaplain made a flattering report of her appearance and intelligence; and, moreover, he found her grandfather disposed (however hopeless he deemed the attempt) to make all practicable efforts to reclaim his daughter.

Such were the home abandoned, and the sacred ties rent asunder, by the terrible addiction to drink, which transformed Eliza Ellams into the lowest order of street-walker, a tattered, shoeless wanderer; and induced her to herd with the most polluted miscreants the metropolis could furnish. St. Giles's was her place of resort, and there, at length, she was picked up literally from the kennel, into which she had fallen in a state of drunken insensibility; and in that shocking condition, which proved irremediable, she died.

If more were required to paint the dreadful

reality of that appalling passion, I could adduce a yet more frightful instance of the calousness it engenders. It absorbs every other feeling of the heart, and stands alone an awful, cankering curse.

Persons such as Eliza Ellams would be the frequent inmates of all the metropolitan prisons, in turn ; and, in this round of incarceration, those who were able (and they were but few) would write letters to their chosen friends who might be located in other prisons. This peculiar class of people were remarkable for three things. First, the steadfast, never-failing denial of guilt, notwithstanding the plainest evidence to disprove their assertions. Secondly, the complacent estimate they appeared to form of their own status, notwithstanding the damning testimony against them of nine-tenths of society in general, and their own sex in particular. And, thirdly, the farcical *empressement* they threw into their attachment towards some chosen prison associate, misnamed friend.

In illustration of the third proposition, Ellams had formed a sort of romantic friend-



ship with one Julia King, who was, at that period, not the least distinguished of my flock. Julia was about 22 years of age, of short but slender form, and could boast, even in prison, of a rosy complexion to set off features of no mean order. She had become prematurely a widow, by the sacrifice of her husband's life upon the gallows, for a burglary, accompanied with violence; and Julia had made no inconsiderable advance in the path of virtue, by becoming merely a practitioner in the higher walk of uttering base coin—viz., by the circulation of counterfeit gold.

It was really amusing to con the effusions that passed between these enthusiastic correspondents. Julia wrote a small cramped hand, and little could be said in praise of her orthography, while Ellams both wrote and spelt in a creditable manner. "My very dearest little Julia," and "my dearest friend," were the relative commencements of their epistles; and thence were banded from one to the other, professions of lasting attachment, and a vast amount of the sentimentality culled from low novels. While Julia King remained

under my care, Ellams never omitted a P. S., with her "respectful duty to the governor."

The last person, amongst this singular combination of characters, whom I shall here attempt to pourtray shall be 'Ann Fisher,' a young woman of short stature, and most repulsive features. She combined all the bad qualities of her criminal associates, without exhibiting one of their redeeming characteristics. She was a compound of wrath, insolence, and violence, and seemed to glory in defiance to all authority, and, if possible, to enjoy the punishment which her bad conduct entailed upon her. One day she walked deliberately up to the matron, in my presence, and dealt her a violent blow in the face, and then squaring up to me in a fistic attitude compelled me to think of self-defence. My prompt disposition to repel attack had the effect of arresting her aggression.

Upon one occasion, Ann Fisher suddenly approached a male officer, and spat full in his face, when the man, irritated by so foul an insult, gave her so effectual an open-handed box on the ear, as to make her stagger and

fall. No one in his heart could condemn so well-merited a retaliation, which had the happy tendency of making the spiteful vixen less pugnacious thereafter. Strange to say, this creature when subsequently under a sentence of transportation (which it caused me devout pleasure to learn was her fate), writing from her temporary abode to a 'dear friend' under my guardianship, desired her "duty to the governor."

Besides the characters whom I have thus sketched, there were others whose distinctive qualities rendered them unruly inmates, but the major part were gentle, and even timid, and would shed tears and exhibit intense alarm whenever the fighting propensities of our select specimens hurried them into extremities.

The illustrations I have afforded have been taken from the division allotted to 'long fines;' but if my first impression of that class were favourable, owing to the temporary order which prevailed, I was on the contrary as much shocked and disheartened when I paid my first visit to the 'short fines.' These consisted

principally of the 'disorderly women,' committed under the Vagrant Act (a very comprehensive statute) for terms varying from seven days to three months, which latter formed the maximum. All convictions under that act combined hard labour with imprisonment, and, at that time, and indeed long after, the treadmill, under that sentence, became the portion of young and hearty females.

My introduction to the 'disorderly yard,' impressed me with the suitability of its denomination. There had just been a dispute, which indeed was still raging, and my ears were assailed with the most unladylike language. There could not have been less than eighty girls and young women congregated in this yard, all attired in their own dresses, most of which combined the tawdry finery which distinguishes this class of persons, and which they deem so attractive in their peculiar calling.

No one who may visit a well-ordered prison of the present day, and witness the regularity, the marked decorum, and the appropriate sedateness of the female prisoners, would be led to conjecture the very opposite features

of such a receptacle which my earliest experience disclosed. It was not then the hour of labour, and, consequently, the whole throng was confusedly intermingled; some were troubled, but many had become active partisans of either of the contending disputants. No sooner was I announced as the new governor, than I was surrounded by a clamorous crowd, who pressed forward to invoke my clemency; and upon this memorable occasion my hands were seized with tender *empressement*, and I was addressed as 'my love,' 'my darling,' 'my dear creature;' and all the conventional endearments of the *pavé* were showered upon me. I had to struggle for enlargement, and beat a hasty retreat, quite confounded by my initiation into 'prison discipline.'

Within a short period of the exercise of my new authority, private intelligence conveyed to me the startling fact, that a well-planned system had long enabled favoured portions of the male and female prisoners daily to meet together in one of the roofs of the building, and I was furnished with a clue to the

discovery of the whole contrivance, and the exact hour of the rendezvous. This clandestine arrangement was, consequently, one afternoon suddenly disturbed by my unlooked-for presence, supported by a few officials, who dared not disobey the direction to accompany me. The full extent of this iniquity stood thus divulged. The men fled with precipitate haste; but Mary Barry, and a woman named Christmas, were caught in the very act of descending from a trap-door, which opened to the roof; and the consternation occasioned by this discovery became perfectly electric.

A close examination of the means adopted to ensure this unlawful meeting disclosed a very simple solution. The female wards, as I have already described, were merely portions of the main building imperfectly fenced off from the males' department. The roof in question ran longitudinally over both compartments. It was accessible by an iron grating on the males' side, which had once been soldered down, but was now removable at pleasure; and, on the other side, by the trap-door I have named, which had to be

reached by standing on an iron balustrade, and then climbing two or three feet up a perpendicular iron supporter, whence the trap-door was easily upraised.

Here, then, was revealed another infamous source of profit to this immaculate prison staff, of both sexes. It at once threw a light upon a delicate investigation of a few preceding years, when, in order to cloak a monstrous dereliction of duty, and to screen the real delinquents, a story was trumped up, which nearly ruined the character of a most respectable man, then clerk to the prison. The whole relation, as it affected him, was a tissue of improbabilities ; but, notwithstanding, Mr. Hassell, the clerk in question, continued, to the termination of his service, to be an object of suspicion in the minds of many persons.

The prompt dismissal of the turnkey of the females' ward was the consequence of this discovery, and that event threw the matron, and the whole of her staff, into a state of the utmost alarm. I was addressed in terms of supplication, and endless were the protestations

of willing submission to all such new regulations as I might deem expedient. The male turnkey's defence prevailed with the magistrates, and his dismissal was, for the time, averted.

A tolerably clear conception may now be formed of the crime and corruption which then pervaded the prison of Cold Bath Fields. It was a very hot-bed of vice, and I should not be guilty of undue exaggeration, if I were to declare my conviction, that few were the degrees, in the ample scale of human wickedness, which had not witnessed their attainment within those walls.



## CHAPTER VII.

EFFICIENT ALLIES—A RUFFIAN—COURTESIES BETWEEN  
THIEVES AND TURNKEYS.

IN the midst of daily discoveries, derivable from various sources, I soon began to appreciate the perplexities of my position, and almost to despair of disentanglement from the manifold cares by which I was on all sides beset. I had, indeed, the chaplain to confer with ; but even his friendly suggestions appeared to confound me, because he counselled me to rely upon the honesty of two or three turnkeys, whose questionable demeanour had awakened my suspicions. And here, by slow degrees, I became cognizant of the amiable

weakness of my reverend adviser, and the arch *finesse* of several of my unprincipled officials. His trust in their probity was the result of their profession of 'piety,' while they were playing their own game of trick and contrivance, under the hypocritical veil of mock sanctity.

The careful perusal, to the full extent of my opportunities, of letters from prisoners to their friends, and *vice versâ*, armed me with some data whereon to found enquiries; and, without betraying my designs, I sought out the abodes of the relatives of prisoners, and, by tact and kindness, collected from them important facts.

One poor woman assured me she had been drained of her last farthing, and had pawned her last remnant of available clothing, to satisfy those remorseless wretches, and bribe them into kindness towards her imprisoned husband. In the agony of her reflections, she exclaimed, wildly, "Oh! what monsters these men are—what hearts of stone they possess!"—and she unfolded a tale of grinding exaction that perfectly aroused my indignation. The information

I had gathered from this visit in London, and had elicited from a similar enquiry at Hammersmith, was made, happily, available against two of those harpies, and, at the next meeting of the visiting justices, they were expelled from the prison.

In the meantime my perusal of letters had brought me acquainted with the case of a convicted felon, whose correspondence with his aged mother disclosed the perfection of filial regard, and many sentiments befitting a generous nature. He bore the assumed name of 'Thompson,' had realized fifty years, and wore in his countenance unerring marks of dissipation. His real name was Mozley; he had been an officer in the Indian army, and had reduced himself to beggary by gaming, and, at length, to the utmost destitution by drink—the result of despair. Amidst his complicated faults and misfortunes, he still retained many of the refined feelings of the gentleman; while his devotion to his mother, and careful regard for her interests, attested an absence of selfishness quite marvellous in one so impoverished and degraded.

The sympathy I had expressed for the fallen condition of that poor man touched his heart, and kindled the liveliest gratitude towards me. My daily notice of him amongst the degenerate group, and every fresh development of my pity, seemed to make him increasingly my debtor, until, at length, I resolved to make him my confidant—to disclose to him all the anxieties that distracted me, and to entrust him with the earnest desire that burned within me to effect the reform of the prison.

I soon had cause to rejoice in the step I had taken, and to perceive the valuable ally I had thus happily secured. I suddenly became master of numberless important facts—had revealed to me the characters of most of the turnkeys—learned their elaborate schemes of extortion, from which my informant had himself deeply suffered—and found myself placed upon a vantage ground, from which I could reliably survey many of the impediments which obstructed my onward course.

I entertained not the remotest doubt of the fidelity of my new confederate, whose alliance

was for a long period carefully concealed within my own breast. It was not even disclosed to the chaplain, for Thompson had so completely denuded of his pseudo piety one of that gentleman's professing disciples—a designing knave of a turnkey—and had imparted to me such conclusive facts to demonstrate his insidious character, that my reverend friend half resented my repudiation of the 'grace,' which he believed rendered his *protegé* proof against the perpetration of fraud and falsehood. Some mistrust of each other's views was thus engendered between the chaplain and myself; and, at length, I reaped much practical experience of the blind infatuation which fashions into willing dupes men of otherwise vigorous faculties, when they have zealously embraced ultra notions of evangelical purification.

The unfitness of my dronish chief turnkey became every day more apparent, until a sharp admonition from the visiting magistrates, opened his eyes to the impracticability of his position, and he prudently resigned. At this crisis, I suggested to the committee,

that my late revered and gallant friend, then Colonel Sir Alexander Dickson (a man whose eminent talents and soldierlike qualities extorted the admiration of all who knew him), would gladly recommend some gifted non-commissioned officer of the Royal Artillery, to fill the vacant post, and that proposition was unanimously applauded, and embraced by the committee.

I was not disappointed in the anticipated good-will of that distinguished officer, who, in this instance, quite confirmed the general estimate which had long prevailed respecting his acute discernment. He spoke in the highest terms of a pensioned sergeant, named Sims, who in due time appeared before the Visiting magistrates, and the testimony borne to his character and qualities by a man of Sir Alexander Dickson's high reputation, ensured his immediate appointment. Never were assiduity and firmness more strikingly combined than in my new deputy, and I soon had the satisfaction to find, that in him I possessed a zealous, bold, and efficient coadjutor. A sudden dawn of hopefulness broke in upon my

labours, and I perceived that the happiest results might reasonably be expected from our conjoint exertions.

A reversal of all the divisional regulations, a fresh periodical appropriation of the officers, frequent suspensions, and many dismissals for culpability or remissness, all tended to disseminate alarm amongst that peccant crew. The offices purchased by prisoners were either abolished or transferred to others, and doubt and apprehension succeeded the late prevailing subtilty and bold assurance of my subordinates.

I had been greatly perplexed, nay, absolutely confounded, by the continual resort of the prison officers to the use of solemn oaths and imprecations, in order to rebut accusations, or to fortify their own assertions. At first, I deemed it impossible that men, who aspired to character, should be found willing, not only to thus asseverate barefacedly and falsely, but to employ unblushing perjury, in order to give colour to the most iniquitous lies. But, so it was, and, by degrees, there was unravelled such a web of refined fraud and duplicity, in-

terwoven with an unlimited amount of solemn asseveration, or unscrupulous abjuration (as occasion required) that I could not fail to discern either a contemptuous disregard for holy names and sacred invocations, or a crafty reliance upon mental reservation. I became, by this discovery, disembarrassed of a serious perplexity, and now pursued my onward course unswayed by any amount of solemn attestation.

Notwithstanding that a prison existed which was expressly designed for remands or commitments for trial at the sessions (the New Prison at Clerkenwell, in addition to Newgate as the county gaol of London and Middlesex) it was the custom of that day to remand to the House of Correction, at Cold Bath Fields, persons whose cases were of the gravest character.

Under this practice, I formed my first experience of the highest order of villains, clothed with the fictitious innocence with which the law invests the accused before conviction. The perpetrators of the Moulsey burglary had electrified the public mind by the extra-



ordinary atrocity of their conduct. In the middle of a night of intense frost, the occupants of a secluded villa were aroused from their sleep, forcibly dragged from their beds, and in a state of nudity hurried down stairs, and locked in a damp cellar. William Banks, James Smith, and John Johnson, apprehended on this charge, were consigned to my keeping, and in Smith I beheld one of the most finished ruffians any age or country could produce.

Physiognomy is too frequently deceptive, but in this man it outwardly portrayed, in truthful lines, the internal machinations of a savage and relentless nature. An exceedingly swarthy complexion was rendered still more sombre by an eternal scowl, the index of innate brutality. An habitual insolence of tone and demeanour, even towards his superiors, disclosed a wilful rudeness, which inborn ferocity disdained to relax. He knew the privileges of his position, guiltless by legal presumption, and he exacted his due in the most offensive manner. Any kind of courtesy appeared to be alien from his nature. In this

instance he was not, on the subsequent trial, fully recognized, and was therefore acquitted, although he had been the promoter of the extreme barbarity which had marked an outrage rarely exceeded in the pitiless character of its details. By that escape, he became thereafter frequently my prisoner for attempts at burglary; and nothing but undeviating severity, whenever he rebelled against law and order, would ensure submission. Inevitable punishment will, in the end, render the most intractable, for their own sakes, wary; and James Smith, although not the less sullen and morose, became, like others, sagely prudent. He was not more than thirty years of age; but, with the exception of Bishop, who burked the Italian boy, Smith stands recorded in my memory—whether in features, demeanour, or career—as a specimen of ruffianism rarely equalled.

Banks was identified, and, in due course, executed. He was a man of athletic form and well moulded countenance, while Johnson, for a villain of the sterner stamp, wore traits demonstrative of a mild and simple disposition.

This last was also acquitted ; and, I have reason to believe, thenceforth steadily pursued his calling of a chimney-sweeper. At least, as I frequently saw him about Clerkenwell, I conclude any depredations in which he may subsequently have indulged, must have been of a less hazardous description than the vocation of a 'cracksman' the 'professional' term for a housebreaker.

We had three detached rooms at the back of the building, which then bore the dignified appellation of 'state rooms,' because they had been originally designed for those charged with or convicted of state offences. Many persons of reputation, or notoriety, had been consigned to those apartments, which had witnessed occasionally the unusual appendages of carpets, sofas, and looking-glasses ; while some of their occupants legitimately enjoyed the refinements of more polished homes. Leigh Hunt, and other political offenders, or persons so designated, had there been incarcerated, and there Fauntleroy lingered out his later wretched days, until finally committed to Newgate for trial.

In these rooms—destitute, however, of luxurious furniture—we used to confine such persons as were sent to us on remand. The erection of the House of Detention, at length, rendered remands to a house of correction unnecessary, and such cases, together with those committed in default of bail, were happily altogether withdrawn from it. It is no longer lawful to assign aught but cases of conviction, to receptacles governed by stringent regulations unsuitable to implied innocence.

While my projects for prison reform were progressing under somewhat promising auspices, Thompson—my imprisoned ally—was in daily communication with me. Our frequent intercourse, however, could not fail to be observed; and, after the dismissal of two turnkeys (an event without example for many preceding years, if ever indeed such a thing had happened before), general alarm and conjecture caused suspicion to alight upon my ally, and his safety began to be endangered. Officers and prisoners alike denounced him; his conversation was shunned, and he deemed it prudent to approach me with caution, and to suggest

all possible secrecy in the conduct of our consultations.

Many days had not elapsed, ere one evening loud cries were heard to issue from a room containing some thirty prisoners. I chanced to be in the garden, contiguous to the scene of disorder, and hearing cries of distress, I summoned to my aid a few officers, and rushed to ascertain the cause. No sooner was the door opened than there stood Thompson trembling with terror, and dripping with perspiration. Missiles of various kinds had been hurled at him from all parts of the room, and he became in dread of losing his life. Preconcert was manifest in this outrage, for each assailant, as he suddenly started up and threw, as suddenly lay down, and no one aggressor could be recognized. The coolest effrontery was exhibited in the general denial, and the entire clique would fain have cajoled me by the assurance that Thompson's excited brain must have conjured up an imaginary scene of violence.

He, however, assured me he had not slept, and that no sort of deception had lurked

beneath his apprehensions, for they were too well founded. Certain it is, I never saw a creature more overpowered by affright, and he was withdrawn from the room more dead than alive; nor do I think he ever quite recovered his composure during his after abode in the prison.

I now found it necessary to transfer Thompson to a place of safety, and consequently sent him to the apprentice gallery, containing a number of separate cells, used for the confinement of refractory apprentices, "with whose binding a less sum than £25 had been paid." Such unruly youths were consigned to prison for limited periods; and under one of the most corrupt turnkeys, Thompson was undoubtedly, a very proper person to be charged with their supervision. The turnkey received from me a strict charge concerning him, and was assured of serious consequences to himself if any injury were allowed to befall him.

At that period I constantly attended the Middlesex Sessions, and was absent for many successive days in court, and thus unable to visit the different compartments of the prison, or to

see the whole of my charge. Upon those occasions Thompson sadly missed his patron, and deplored the lost opportunities of consultation. He never failed, however, to commit to writing whatever he conceived would serve and interest me, and, with practical suggestions, mostly contrived to blend some kindly but respectful sentiments.

One day he dilated in touching terms upon the affliction which my absence occasioned him ; and the pen of ‘ a convicted felon ’ thus, in classical terms, described his emotion :—  
“ For I can truly say,” continued the writer,  
“ *vultus ubi tuus affulsit captivo, it dies gravior,  
et soles melius nitent.*”

To that ill-fated man, I owe a debt of deep gratitude, for unspeakable were the services he rendered me. The facts he disclosed, enabled me to grapple with unscrupulous scoundrels, and his ever watchful eye contrived to penetrate many of their schemes to deceive me. His sentence was curtailed in requital for his good offices, for they constituted a public boon. When free, he continued from time to time to visit me, and upon one

such call, he timidly requested the loan of three pounds for a fortnight ; his request was instantly complied with, and at the promised period, the sum was punctually repaid.

I believe he entertained an earnest desire to regain respectability and would, I am convinced, have proved true to any trust confided to his probity. It was, however, no easy matter to advance the interests of an individual of Thompson's antecedents; and, although he had not been discharged without some temporary means, they dwindled away by degrees, until recurring destitution drove him once more to that fatal resource of those who despair, which had already so fearfully blighted his bygone prospects. He was too kindly filial and honourable to trench upon the slender resources of his aged mother, and degraded though he had been, was also too delicate to importune me. I missed him for a time, and sought him unavailingly, for I felt an interest in his welfare. Newgate was the place of our last meeting, and there that wretched man's appearance would indeed 'point a moral,' too sternly appalling to need any touch from pity's pen.



The doom of transportation cast its harrowing influence over his concluding years, and, oh! how bitter and desolating had been the fruits of his ruinous passion for play! That fatal vice involved others in its attendant train, and poor Thompson, with a yearning yet for honourable reputation, died a felon.

Meanwhile, my indefatigable scrutiny into the clandestine transactions of the prison, the discoveries I succeeded in making, and the removals I effected, excited a wide-spread spirit of revenge. Anonymous letters, breathing vengeance against me, poured thickly in, and although they did not deter me from my fixed purpose, they necessarily awakened both anxiety and alarm for my personal safety. The new police force had not been yet established; and I have already dilated upon the brutal lawlessness of abandoned thieves, the lengths to which their resentment would extend, and the little check the government, or the police offices could oppose to their revengeful machinations.

Mine, therefore, was a position fraught with labour, care, and peril. At this juncture I was

admonished by a turnkey, named Leonard, that my life was in danger, that the direst curses were vented on all sides against me, that every term and epithet expressive of rage and malice were freely indulged, and vows of retaliation openly professed. I was more especially cautioned against the risk I incurred while attending chapel; and, thus menaced on all hands, I deemed it prudent to consult my own security, and be armed for any possible emergency. I, therefore, carried loaded pistols in my pocket by day, and slept with the same weapons beside me at night. I neither left the outer gate, nor returned to it, without a careful reconnaissance of every person or object near it, and no precaution was wanting on my part to guard against sudden surprise or attack.

For many months my existence was one of painful solicitude but still, under Providence, I failed to experience any overt act of violence. Empty vituperation and futile boasts sufficed to satisfy the spirit of exasperation breathed within and without the prison.

I have since been largely informed by in-

telligent prisoners, and from long observation have no doubt of the fact, that public deprecators entertain a sort of mysterious awe of those in superior authority over them, whom they regard with a species of superstitious reverence. To this cause I may have been indebted for exemption from bodily harm under such a profusion of maledictory denunciation. Of this I have been made perfectly aware, that so strong is the sense of justice amongst even the lowest malefactors, that, whatever amount of punishment may have been inflicted upon themselves personally, if they are conscious that it resulted from the just exercise of duty, they retain no resentment whatever, but will smile and bow with as much complacency as though they had been petted and indulged.

In like manner I discerned that, in the majority of cases, excessive rigour failed in its effect. Mete out the punishment proportionately with the offence, and most defaulters will in their hearts acknowledge they deserved it, and their outward demeanour will attest their conviction.

Still, my experience has also made manifest the criminal thirst for vengeance which pervades the minds of some few (happily, very few) wretches, whose whole soul becomes absorbed with secret schemes of sanguinary revenge. Hereafter I shall have to adduce *two* such examples, but, out of the number of at least 230,000 persons, criminally convicted and consigned to my jurisdiction, in the course of years, how small is the proportion of miscreants incited to such remorseless extremities!

In the midst of scenes and subjects suggestive of grave reflections, some occurrences seemed designed to kindle ludicrous emotions. Were it not for the contemplation that whatever tended to lower the standard of public justice was mischievous to the community and destructive of public morals, one might almost have been tempted to indulge in mirthful excitement by the farcical nature of some of the illustrations of prison management. For instance, I was casually sitting at the office window, when I saw a well-dressed man enter the court-yard and make for the main entrance.

while, at the same moment, a turnkey, descending the steps, confronted him. A prompt recognition, a hand cordially extended to grasp that of the *nouveau arrivé*, a hearty shake, and an emphatic "how *do* you do?" were followed by the friendly enquiry, "well, how long have you got?" and that interrogatory answered, an assurance audibly ensued, "well, we'll take all the care we can of you." To my astonishment, I found this scene to have occurred between a swell-thief, just committed, who had a minute before stepped out of a hackney-coach, and a turnkey, named Day, whose uncle was the chief-constable of one of the police-offices.

Such courtesies between thieves and sub-gaolers had then been so common, that Day quite forgot to look around him; and, by his unwariness, I reaped the advantage of a practical lesson in prison discipline.

It had so happened, that a short time previously, the late Mr. William Flower, then a visiting magistrate, upon hastily entering the prison, ran full tilt against a hamper, about to be carried into the interior. His curiosity

required to be satisfied, and he insisted upon an examination of the contents of the basket. It was directed to the identical "Mr. Day," and an accompanying note presented a swell-mobsmen's "compliments to Mr. D., and begged his acceptance of a present of choice apples." Mr. Flower, though devoutly wishing well to the prison, was one of those easy, good-tempered men—with no lack, however, of ability—who could not bring his mind to adopt extreme measures, and Day escaped with an admonition.

On the occasion, however, of the cordial welcome of a public delinquent, it chanced, rather *mal-apropos* for Mr. Day, that certain prior derelictions had been registered against him, and the *tout ensemble* ensured his dismissal.

It was not, however, upon Mr. Day alone, or upon any of the turnkeys, that substantial offerings were sought to be poured; for I myself was selected as the recipient of numerous bounties, both from the friends of prisoners—who thus aimed at securing my favour—and from interested tradesmen, who hoped to reap

advantage from a little delicate attention, which might more appropriately be construed into overt bribery. I was not long in discovering that unscrupulous pliability need not go unrewarded ; for, within a fortnight of my nomination, two ladies, gaudily attired, were ushered into my sitting-room, and supplicatingly pleaded for indulgence to their brother—one Healey, an utterer of spurious coin, imitative of gold. They not only essayed to move me by tears, but unreservedly intimated that “ any sum would willingly be paid ” for my good offices in his behalf.

Moreover, house-lamb, game, poultry, and fish, all neatly packed, and accompanied by propitiatory notes, poured in rather thickly ; and, one day, a twelfth-cake, of costly size, denoted a trader’s opportune provision for a seasonable festivity.

Such tenders and donations were, doubtless, in compliance with ancient usage ; but their prompt rejection, in course of time, operated to relieve me from such implied insults, until, at length, the presentation of those offensive gifts fell into utter desuetude.

## CHAPTER VIII.

AN ABLE COADJUTOR—THE SECRETS OF THE PRISON  
HOUSE—THE NEW POLICE—A DECISIVE STEP.

MR. SIMS, the new chief turnkey, proved to be exactly suited to the office he had undertaken. He was, *par excellence*, the right man in the right place. Not the least spice of timidity neutralized the boldness of a temperament exactly framed to grapple with obstacles, and to contend with opposition. Devoid of education, he still possessed a strong natural intelligence, which enabled him to comprehend and to master whatever might prove essential to the performance of his duty. Endowed with a mechanical genius, prompt and ener-



getic, fruitful in resources, hale in constitution, and fearless in spirit, he was never dismayed by any combination of sudden mischances, or by any amount of wilfulness or obstinacy in those below him. They must have possessed remarkable astuteness, and unheard of perseverance and indefatigability, to outmatch him in perception, patience, or endurance. Such was the man, who, as sergeant of the Royal Artillery, had attracted the notice of the late Sir Alexander Dickson, an officer who combined in a remarkable degree, all the rare qualities which constitute the accomplished soldier. I had had the great advantage to observe the bearing of that gallant chief during many months of active service, both in America, Belgium, and France, and when he recommended Sims, in highly eulogistic terms, I knew from actual experience of Sir Alexander's rare discrimination upon all points, that Sims must have well merited the distinction. Still, I hardly expected to have found so remarkable a concentration of useful properties in a man of his stamp. He was, under the peculiar circumstances of the prison, the fittest man

for his post that could by possibility have been selected.

The fault observable in Mr. Sims was one which experience has led me to detect in most other persons of deficient education, who become invested with authority. They are almost universally strangers to that suavity which so largely exercises a benignant influence over the minds of others ; and, wanting in forbearance, they rush into extremities against those who incur their displeasure. Owing to this defect, while they are calculated to prove able and meritorious subordinates, they rarely shine as principals. In our instance, I was at hand to control my deputy's impetuosity. I know how frequently he failed to comprehend my mildness, both in rebuke and punitive visitation ; but I knew full well then, and I know still more assuredly now, how powerful an agent kindness is in the exercise of command, and the exaction of obedience. It is true, that the man whose authority extends over multitudinous hosts must learn to discriminate. He must not prove weakly pliant ; for, in that event, the subtle instinct of the

turbulent and designing will assuredly outwit him. A stern and imposing deportment is often indispensable ; but, whenever gentleness will avail, or the interposition of kind remonstrance promise to become effectual, they constitute powerful auxiliaries in the hands of rulers.

A man of Mr. Sims's resolute and unwearied disposition was well calculated to snatch at any trifling clue, pursue it with untiring assiduity, and thereby ferret out many a secret combination. It was really marvellous to observe the discoveries he effected, and the patient investigation which he extended to any mystery he was resolved to unravel. Ever active and circumspect, he surprised individuals in numberless petty delinquences, and was busy worming his way into various intricate contrivances to defeat authority, when the enemy deemed it politic to endeavour to tamper with his honesty, and seduce him into a connivance with their schemes, which might also prove gainful to himself.

Consequently, Mr. Bleksley, a magnate amongst turnkeys, who had fattened upon the

peculations then rife, was deputed to experimentalize upon the blandishments of tea, and evening entertainments. Winning smiles were, therefore, lavished upon Sims, who was invited accordingly. Sims had the prudence neither to accept nor to decline, but returned a temporizing answer until he could consult with me.

We both chuckled over the obvious interpretation of which this wily move was susceptible, and decided that the invitation should be accepted, and the devices of these petty intriguers thoroughly sifted. The plot was speedily divulged; for, in a frank and affected confidential tone, Bleksley deplored my headstrong proceedings, and depicted in plaintive language the certain annihilation which all such innovations portended to the turnkeys' 'perquisites;' gains so long enjoyed, and which had proved so ample. Sims was then implored to consult his own interest, and to coalesce with them, due assurances being proffered that the secrecy essential to the fulfilment of the compact should be devoutly observed.

The conspirators were not long in doubt as to the failure of their project, and thenceforth they were less confiding to Sims, but more wary, and united in concocting fresh combinations to meet their altered circumstances.

Occasionally, a prisoner would be disposed to 'split,' and certain disclosures would thus be elicited. In consequence of some such occurrence, Sims and I had determined upon a search by night; and, at close of day, we stole into the prison, and, noiselessly invading the infirmary, we threw the nurse and all who surrounded him (none really sick) into a state of the greatest excitement and confusion. And here we made a novel discovery. We found that the payment to the turnkey of two shillings and sixpence per night each, from a select number of felon prisoners, enabled them to repose on soft beds in the infirmary, and to enjoy the luxury of sheets. Several of this privileged few were detected skulking under the beds, with the vain hope of eluding our observation.

Sims made the most minute search in every conceivable quarter, and, ripping open mattresses and bolsters, the varied traffic of this

quarter of the prison was completely laid bare. There we found, stowed away, small papers of tobacco, made up for delivery, with an exorbitant charge marked upon each ; writing paper, cut into the smallest saleable sheets, with pens, pencils, &c., ready for demand ; the money realized by the trade, carefully rolled up ; numerous articles, the fruits of barter, consisting of silk handkerchiefs, gloves, stockings, and various strange commodities, even children's shoes, and women's petticoats. Nothing, in short, was disdained that seemed convertible into money ; and these things had been exchanged for such minute quantities of tobacco, or some valueless article, that the earnest yearning for some slight taste of these luxuries, on the one hand, and the elastic consciences of their vendors, on the other, were made equally manifest. Where credit promised to be safe, it appeared to have been given, for we captured the ledger, in which stood recorded many accounts, both settled and unpaid, while sundry letters and memoranda cast much light upon the secret transactions of the prison.

This curious investigation took us upwards of four hours to complete ; but, before we departed, the nurse, and all who had knowingly violated the orders so recently promulgated, were transferred from their comfortable berths in the infirmary to the punishment cells. None of those interested in our welfare knew precisely where we had gone, and our long detention within those dreary walls had created the utmost anxiety for our safety. When, therefore, at length, we did emerge, we found wailing hearts awaiting, with fearful suspense, some intelligence of the cause of our protracted absence. We were welcomed with tears of grateful delight, for the most ominous forebodings had been excited for our fate. Such was the terror inspired by our vocation in that bygone day.

That intense consternation was not without reasonable excuse or solid foundation, for formidable *emeutes* amongst the prisoners had previously arisen, and excited much alarm. They had, doubtless, been fomented by the prison officers ; but, upon one occasion, a dangerous mutiny in a felons' yard, containing

at least one hundred prisoners, became difficult to quell, and had exposed me to imminent danger. The late Sir James Williams, then temporary chairman of the committee, waited, in consequence, upon the Home Secretary, and the process whereby I could speedily obtain military aid, if requisite, was digested. Some of the journals of the day gave the relation of that outbreak, and paid me the compliment to affirm that the mutiny had been subdued by my firmness.

No wonder, therefore, considering the unusual incident of our four hours' absence, in the obscurity of night, and with the consciousness that our mission might possibly irritate a band of ruffians, at once numerous and ferocious—that the timid hearts of women should quail beneath the peril we were presumed to have encountered. Thanks, however, to the patriotic foresight of the late Sir Robert Peel, the time was fast approaching, when, by a ready access to an organized police force, safety might be assured, and all such painful apprehensions utterly vanish. The latter end of September, 1829, saw the new police force



first mustered in the metropolis; at the outset in paucity of numbers, but with a nucleus for gradual extension.

That the first selection of constables was not of the safest kind, may be inferred from the following incident.

When I assumed the government of the prison, I found there three men, who had been apprehended, disguised in women's attire, and engaged in a midnight 'attempt to commit burglary.' That offence is included in the wide and senseless category of 'misdemeanour,' and the penalty is limited to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. Those men remained with me about six months (the residue of their term), and were then discharged. One of them bore the inexhaustible name of 'Smith,' a name, indeed, that perplexed us not a little, so very numerous were its bearers. He was a tall young man, not yet thirty years of age, was shrewd and intriguing (a quality as equally discerned in a prison as without its walls), and was gifted with no small share of intelligence, of which the absence of principle alone impeded the

useful application. By his restless peccadillos, he had made himself too well known to me. I could not readily forget him, and rejoiced to be rid of him when he went.

Within a year of Smith's discharge, I chanced to dine at the West India Dock Tavern, at Blackwall, and on coming out at night, I found two or three waiters in earnest conversation with some new policemen (then literally *new*), and heard one of that body recommend that a window should be left unfastened, "to allow our men to look in and see that all's right."

"Oh, yes, indeed," said a waiter, "we have lost plate already, and that would be just the way to lose more,"

Attracted by that unusual colloquy, I stopped for an instant, and forthwith recognized in the man who counseled the unfastening system, my old acquaintance Smith, who as promptly recognized me, and thereupon moved away with great celerity.

I hastily followed and overtook him.

"Holloa, Mr. Smith," I said, "can that possibly be you?"

"I beg pardon, sir," he answered; "you have the advantage of me—I really don't know you."

"But I know you very well," I rejoined.

"Perhaps, sir," he said, "you may have known me in the army?"

"By no means, Mr. Smith, I knew you in Cold Bath Fields Prison," I retorted; and Smith, seeing no likelihood of eluding my recognition, or belying his own identity, assumed another tone, and exclaimed, "For God's sake, Mr. Chesterton, don't expose me! I am trying to get a bit of bread honestly, and I hope you won't deprive me of it."

That appeal was irresistible. I could not find in my heart to betray him; and told him so. I admonished him to be cautious of his conduct, and did not disguise my astonishment, considering what I knew of his previous history, at hearing the advice he had just given to the waiter, to leave a window open, in order to defeat the plans of plate stealers. However, he protested that his motives were pure, and I left him with a sense of the insecurity of a neighbourhood protected by such police watchers.

Before the lapse of many weeks, the notable Smith was again in my keeping as a law-breaker. In that instance, for working an illicit still.

“So you have left the police force,” I inquired.

“Yes, sir,” he replied, “they called me a swindler and a cheat, and, as I thought they might as well call me a thief at once, I left them.”

I told him I feared they would not be far out in whichever term they applied, and his imprisonment having expired, I lost sight of one who had sustained the triple character of burglar, policeman, and revenue defrauder.

But to resume the subject of prison abuses. So enormous had been the emoluments to the subordinates—fruits of the disgraceful system which then stained the administration of almost every prison in the kingdom, and this, most probably, far beyond all others—that an obstinate determination seemed to prevail amongst the older officers to cling with tenacious grasp to their corrupt privileges. Every effort was made to seduce from their duty the last ap-

pointed, and so effectually, that several of the latter were detected and summarily dismissed, so awkwardly had they practised their dishonest lessons.

Some notion may be formed of the extent of those unhallowed gains, since it came to my knowledge that, just on the eve of my appointment, one of the turnkeys had boasted in the parlor of a neighbouring public-house, that (employing a coarse form of phraseology) his perquisites averaged at least twenty-five shillings a day. Doubtless, much depended upon the tact and heartless rapacity of those functionaries, either to swell or to diminish their individual profits, but in my own judgment, some of them by the multiplicity of their illicit transactions, must have realized an average even exceeding the above ample estimate.

No wonder, therefore, that they should regard their sudden privation with dismay, and employ every available stratagem to defeat the new *régime*. A fresh code of signals, the wariest precaution, and a discriminating choice, of those with whom they traded, coupled with a price enhanced by the hazard of the enter-

prise, all tended to baffle our efforts, and to defeat even the ceaseless watchfulness of Sims himself. Interdicted articles were found to abound, and so close and wily were the combined dispositions of this nefarious crew, that we stood fairly abashed by our ill-success in the work of complete reformation.

In such an emergency there remained but one alternative for me to choose, and, convinced of its urgent necessity, I resolved to adopt it. My sole remaining resource was to denounce the whole body of corruptionists and counsel their instant removal. I, consequently, penned a report to submit to the consideration of the visiting magistrates, in which I enlarged upon the impossibility of duly performing the functions of my office, and of enforcing salutary regulations, without the co-operation of faithful and willing subordinates. I exposed the difficulty under a dishonest combination to obtain the proofs necessary to establish individual guilt, and concluded by denouncing six turnkeys of the old school, as men in whom I could repose no confidence whatever, but who, on the contrary, obstructed all my efforts

to enforce reform, and to further improvement.

In proceeding to this extremity, I knew the importance of securing the approval of Mr. Hoare, who was then in the chair of the committee; for his voice was all-powerful in every move relating to the establishment, and without his support success would be hopeless. I, consequently, waited upon him, half apprehending that cautious policy based upon benevolence, which ever prompted him to pause, and to deliberately weigh whatever might appear to indicate severity.

Mr. Hoare read my report with deep attention, and, to my surprise and satisfaction, discerned the necessity of the step, and promised to support it in committee. At the ensuing meeting the report was unanimously adopted, and a notification was made in January, 1830, to those six turnkeys, that the county declined their further services.

From that time forth, there was a thorough extinction of the illicit traffic which had so long prevailed. A final blow had been struck at all the foregone corruption, and we were

left at liberty to pursue an ameliorating course, and gradually, with the extension of the buildings, to lay the foundation for progressive discipline, which was soon destined to receive an impulse from the attention which seemed suddenly to engross the public mind on the momentous subject of secondary punishment.

And here I am bound, in gratitude, to offer a tribute of respect to the visiting justices of that day, who, throughout my trying initiation, afforded me the most frank and unhesitating support. They watched my exertions with the liveliest interest, smoothed and encouraged my progress, and lent me the aid of their authority, which proved so much the more potent and effectual because it was given with perfect unanimity. The committee consisted of men who were an honour to the bench, and who would have adorned any station. With the respected name of Samuel Hoare, were associated Sir George Hampson, Bart., Captain Acklom, R.N., and Mr. Samuel Mills. There were other men less eminent in their qualifications, and with varied peculiarities, sometimes difficult to direct; but, during my



noviciate, one spirit seemed exclusively to animate the whole body, and the public good, involved in my efforts, seemed to be the sole object of their conferences.

It is no less strange than true that my discouragements arose principally, in an official quarter, from my reverend friend the chaplain. His sectarian spirit would not allow him to brook the exposure of three faithless professors of his tenets, whose unworthiness I had uncloaked; and, consequently, he vehemently opposed what he deemed, or at least designated, my ultra spirit of reform. Owing to our antecedent relations, I deplored this alienation, and employed various arts of conciliation, short of the abandonment of my own strong convictions. He was, ultimately, compelled reluctantly to admit his error; but I learned practically that nothing is more difficult to regulate than a fanatical spirit, nor aught more irreconcilable than offended dogmatism. He has long since been called to his final account, and may all his weaknesses lie interred with his remains. If he had been indiscreet and unyielding, he was, at least,

fearless and sincere in the course which his blind prejudices led him to construe into the cause of truth. The reminiscence of his character presents to my mind such a compound of intrepidity and weakness, of dogged perseverance in one single direction, and lamentable want of discrimination in the practical application of a principle upon which he bent all the faculties of his mind, that he was calculated to do quite as much mischief in the dissemination of ideal holiness, as many another man would commit in the open advocacy of depravity.

Nor is there to be found any other class of men more bitterly unrelenting. Only once really offend their prejudices, and you arouse an implacability, which, as I experienced to my sorrow, could never afterwards be appeased. I subsequently failed in every attempt to re-establish our original good understanding, and I was made to feel that, simply in the fulfilment of duty, I had converted a friend into an enemy, because, by worldly intelligence, I had been able to unmask the artifices of pseudo piety on which he had relied.

A sting had thus been inflicted upon a pride of a very remarkable nature—an item in the vast catalogue of human frailties which is purely *sui generis*, and defies all rational interpretation.

## CHAPTER IX.

A TALENTED PRISONER—HIS SKETCH OF THIEVES AND  
THEIR HABITS.

WITHIN a year of my appointment, I witnessed the trial and conviction of a young surgeon for arson. The offence had been committed with the view to defraud an insurance company. He was then about twenty-two years of age, of slender form, pale face, with small and intelligent features, and sandy hair : he had also a club-foot. Nothing could be more meek and subdued than that young man's demeanour and address, and no physiognomist would ever have divined that an unusual amount of fraud lurked beneath that deceptive exterior.

The gentleness of his bearing, and the pallor of his countenance, seemed to plead with his judges in his behalf, and thus, escaping the customary doom, for such an offence, of transportation, he received the sentence of eighteen months' imprisonment and hard labour. Submitting, as he did, with exemplary quietude and patience to his new condition, in due turn, he was selected for superior employment.

At that time, prisoners were eligible for the post of instructors of the ignorant, and, in the strictest interpretation, *unlettered* beings, whom want or neglect had cast into the prison, and W——s was appointed schoolmaster to a host of thievish urchins. His education and quiet disposition quite fitted him for such an office. As unlimited intercommunication was lawful, W. had the opportunity not only freely to question his pupils, but also to glean from numerous roguish adults, ample particulars of their craft.

He duly informed me of the facts he had collated, and proposed, under my sanction, to write a compendious history of thievery, with a glossary of the terms employed by its

votaries. I of course assented, and a most interesting paper was the result. It was presented to me, and I not only perused it with profitable attention, but I subsequently lent it to Mr. Chadwick, whose high intelligence, and statistical indefatigability are so well known. That gentleman will doubtless yet remember that instructive treatise, since he asked my permission to lend it to a very distinguished peer, by whom it was unhappily lost, or mislaid amongst the endless variety of papers which passed through his lordship's study.

I still, however, retain from the same pen a much slighter dissertation upon thieves and their habits, which tends to illustrate the practices of that class in those days, and, in most particulars, is applicable to the present period. It is worthy of perusal and is as follows.

“Thieves, gonophs, or crossmen, in London, are divided into several mobs or gangs, named from the district which they inhabit, distinct from each other; but the parties forming the several mobs are well known to each other—not so much of late years by any particular

marks on their person, as by their constant intercourse with each other, by their frequenting the same houses, and by their suffering in the same prisons. In practising their art (or, as they express it, 'when at work'), they do not indiscriminately practise all the branches of their profession ; some are more expert than others at pocket-picking ; these are termed *buzmen* or *nuzmen*. This is the branch the swell mob chiefly practise. . Most young thieves commence their career by taking handkerchiefs, and are called *fogle-hunters*,—a silk handkerchief being named a *fogle*, (most of 3rd Boys, 6th and 7th yards, of this class). The swell mob select some of these *kids* (boys), more expert and respectable in their appearance than their fellows, to assist them in their *skin* and *sncezer* (purse and snuff-box) buzzing depredations. Some thieves are expert at snatching anything from the person, and this branch is termed *flimping*. A lady's reticule, a gentleman's watch, or a child's necklace, in a press (or, as they term it, *a push*), is readily taken by the flimper, who, behind others, watches his opportunity.

to snatch it away. This is most frequently practised at theatres, on entering or retiring. Some, more daring, join in a party of four to six—meet a gentleman whom they may have seen to have money about him, or who has a watch (*yack* or *thimble*), and, by jostling and hustling him about, take away everything from him. This is done more commonly in retired places—sometimes, in public streets, and, more astounding, occasionally in the midst of the day, in the exposed streets of this metropolis: so cleverly do the parties concerned meet at the same moment around their victim, rob him, and as speedily move off in various directions to meet at some appointed place, leaving the object of plunder in a state of perfect wonder and astonishment, if not of momentary stupor. This is named *ramping*. Others, more determined, practise housebreaking: these are termed *cracksmen*. Some, to gain entrance, make use of false keys (*screws*), and these are named *screwsmen*. Most cracksmen are men who have been transported (*lagged* or *served*), and are termed tried men. They are to be considered despe-



rate characters—men who would not scruple to take life, when their own or associates' (*pals'*) safety demands the sacrifice. Some crack a pane of glass in a shop front, and, by passing the wet thumb along, they can direct the crack as they please; the piece of glass thus separated is to be removed in various ways—which effected, they remove jewels, or silk goods, to an amazing amount. This is named *starring*. Others practise going into areas, or outhouses, under pretence of begging or selling trifling articles, and take valuables, as plate, &c., which may lay in their way. This thief is called a *sneaksmán*. A species of this description of thieving is done by boys, who go into shops on their hands and feet, get round the counter, take the till, and then sneak out in the same manner—their safety depending on no customer coming in meantime. This is termed *lob-sneaking*. The names given to the plunderers of society appear to be of endless variety—vagrants, divided into *cadgers*, and *high-flyers*; *showful-pitchers*; *smashers* or *shawnsmen*, utterers of counterfeit coin, dog fanciers, or dog stealers; fences,

or buyers of stolen articles; Jew bouncers, those who obtain money by means of false notes-of-hand, &c., &c.—each of which, in its place, would require pages to describe.

In their habits and manner of life, men living on the '*cross*' (by dishonesty) vary much amongst themselves. A grand distinction is to be drawn, in this respect, between the swell mob and common thieves; the former being, for the most part, men of the world, of some education—not appearing at all flash (thief-like), but, on the contrary, acting the part of gentlemen in society. Unknown as thieves, to any except their own immediate companions, they frequent those public-houses the landlords of which they know to be what they term right (*i.e.* a thief's friend), who would screen them from justice, in case of necessity, by all the means in his power. The houses of this sort vary according to circumstances; those at present used, are as follows."

Here six public-houses are named, which, at this distant period, may have acquired respectability; and, therefore, their signs are withheld.

“The apartment they make use of is generally on the first floor, and is on occasion held sacred by even the landlord himself—it is here they plan their various schemes—here they meet the evening before a levee, address, or other public procession takes place, to arrange what parties are to work together, and where to meet the ensuing morning—here they assemble in the evening after the levee, to share their spoils—to joke and tell how neatly the *skins* (purses) were drawn from the *kicks* (trousers pockets) the *thimbles* (watches), from the *gurrells* (fobs), the *ridge* (gold) or *wedge* (silver) *sneezers* (snuff-boxes) from the *fans* (waistcoat pockets), the *dummys* (pocket-books) from the *pits* (breast pockets) or *slashes* (outside coat pockets), and how the old *bloak* (old man) was *propped* (squeezed), and his skin drawn from his fan where he had been seen just before to deposit it for better security. In this apartment they agree to a marauding excursion through the country, visiting all the fairs, races, &c., on the way, appointing for their purposes, who is to act the part of countryman with the smock-frock,

breeches, boots, and spurs—who the servant, and who the gentleman, and here over their bottle they tell of deeds of darkness, some of which in the cracking line (house-breaking) would cause the blood of an honest man to run cold.

“The booty they obtain is amazing, but it is as soon squandered by their profligate and generally debauched manner of living. Their life when engaged at their profession being a scene of constant anxiety, all their leisure hours are spent over the bottle and pipe. In the addresses which took place to the late Queen, pocket-picking was practised to a great extent; they considered themselves unfortunate if they did not realize twenty or thirty pounds each man per night. In their business they are liable to equal fluctuations with men living in the *square* world (honest tradesmen). It is remarked that they are particularly dissatisfied and discontented when baulked of an expected purse, more especially if they have seen its value; under such circumstances they will sit for hours in a meditating mood, without exchanging a word with their companions,

who well knowing their feelings, do not interrupt them, until by the action of some intoxicating liquor their spirits revive. Some of the swell mob combine the qualifications of cracksmen and buzmen, but this is rare ; they make a great deal of money at the gaming booths at the various fairs and races which they frequent, by different manœuvring games where the chances are three and four to one in their favour. When in town, and at a loss for cash, they make sure of a trifle by attending the theatre, where in the push on going in or coming out, they are certain of getting a watch or a purse at a comparative trifling risk. They frequent all public performances where a great concourse of people are assembled, as prize fights, &c.

“ As a body, their system is so complete in itself, that they can obtain information on any subject at any time. They are well aware, it is confidently asserted, in many cases of the parties who, and the time when, they have to draw sums of money from the banking houses, as also of the time when dividends have to be drawn, indeed 'tis said, their information is so

sufficient on this head, that a party will go on 'change, and without previous personal acquaintance, pick out his man—dog him—nor does he leave him till, in many instances, he succeeds in robbing him, sometimes under such circumstances, to an alarming amount,

“ Their homes are generally in the suburbs of town ; when married they for the most part keep cases (houses of accommodation) some are unmarried, and these, to remove suspicion, take a small house and keep a *jomer*, or *sheelah* (mistress), who gives out in the neighbourhood that her husband is a traveller of some description or other. Others reside with those of their fraternity who occupy entire houses. The conduct of this class of thieves towards each other is in every respect strictly honourable ; their attachments firm, and confidence implicit.

“ Cracksmen and screwmen, come next in order to the swell mob, as to respectability of character in their profession, and lastly, common thieves, who differ in every respect from the above, being men of no connection, many nurtured in the art from their mother's womb.

They place no reliance on each other, unless obliged so to do. The thefts they commit are petty, and consequently frequent, and they must be considered as of the lowest grade in society. The houses they frequent are very low, and vary much, as—”

Here three houses are named.

The writer of the paper was one of those perverse beings who, untaught by experience, still clung to the hope of thriving by chicanery. Six years subsequently to his discharge from his first sentence, he again became my prisoner. In this instance, he had been guilty of an offence which none but a man of ability could commit. He had passed an examination before the College of Surgeons, for a consideration, in the name of another, for whom he was about unlawfully, and most mischievously to obtain a diploma.

The party represented, was likewise committed, but for a longer period. He was a simple-minded, kind-hearted Irishman, who, by some means, had acquired the diploma of an M.D. in the sister kindom, and was said to be a good classical scholar.

W. had for some time been engaged as a 'grinder,' or person who 'crammed' medical students to enable them merely to pass an examination. I was anxious to know if his long incarceration of eighteen months had rendered his person so familiar to thieves as to have subjected him to the mortification of recognition, by persons whom it must necessarily have been of importance to avoid. I found, however, from his statement, that only *once* during the intervening period of six years, had he been recognized, and then in Wych Street he had heard, *en passant*, a boy say to another, "there goes our schoolmaster." Here, we have a notable proof of the salutary metamorphosis effected by the change from the prison attire to the ordinary social costume. At the end of six months I lost sight of W., and as I saw him no more, I hope he applied his capabilities to worthier and safer objects.



## CHAPTER X.

PLOTS TO ESCAPE—TREADWHEEL LABOUR—VARIED  
PORTRAITS.

I HAD not been many weeks in office, ere my reforming spirit had either so curtailed the stealthy comforts of the incarcerated, or fenced their attainment about with obstacles, that the increased and increasing irksomeness of confinement suggested, amongst other remedies, a desire to escape. A plan was consequently contrived, upon which several men, groaning under lengthened sentences, were in daily consultation, and whereby they hoped to elude our vigilance, and get free. One of the number, however, possessed of less

daring than the rest, relented, and confided the whole scheme to Sims, simply exacting that we should quietly frustrate the contrivance, but visit none of its abettors with punishment.

Sufficient was discovered in the search and inquiries that ensued, to confirm the intelligence we had received, and we got possession of a long and strongly ravelled rope, which had been prepared and secreted to facilitate the execution of the plan. Our fourth yard contained a few desperate misdemeanants, whose adventurous spirit had been excited by the tempting sinuosities of a leaden water-pipe, which was trained to the very top of a divisional wall, whence it descended to supply a yard opening into the garden. From that point, other tactics had been digested, and an early period had been fixed upon for the requisite attempt, when, by the disclosures I have related, we were enabled to step in to mar the plot.

In those days of doubt and difficulty, when the secret and confidential communications of prisoners proved, occasionally, most valuable to us, we cautiously observed two conditions.

First, we never disclosed our authority without the fullest permission of our confidant; and, secondly, we faithfully observed the terms upon which he had been led to divulge any matter useful to ourselves. With these strict observances, we sometimes contrived to glean reliable information, and, by slow degrees, it became known that we were worthy of trust.

In this case of premeditated escape, we were true to our principle, and satisfied ourselves with such a fresh distribution of the prisoners involved, and with such further arrangements as tended to promote security. Amongst other things, we inserted the seductive water-pipe into the wall, imbedded it in cement, and, by that simple contrivance, obviated further danger through that medium.

In the course of years, it frequently happened that we detected crude contrivances for escape, which, in consequence of our vigilance, were rarely tested; and, upon those discoveries, a few days of solitary confinement, and stricter surveillance over the offending individual, sufficed as a punishment. In this identical instance, however, the plan was de-

cidedly the best that, under the circumstances, could have been devised; but its inventors little then conceived to what an interesting end their ingenuity would be directed.

The incident had blown over, and troubled us no longer, when, one afternoon, a county magistrate introduced into the prison Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer, who came ostensibly to visit the establishment, but in reality to compass a secret object of his own. In the course of our walk through the wards, he inquired "if I had ever had an escape?" I answered, "No," but appeared to delight him by the information that we had recently frustrated a well-conceived plot, for he seemed eagerly to catch at my words, and anxiously asked for the particulars. I conducted him to the very yard, showed the track of the now concealed water-pipe, and thence took him to various spots, and confided to him the whole details of the design. He seemed to take a special interest in the development of the scheme; nor had I the least idea of the use to which my exposition was ere long to be converted.

On taking his leave, Sir Edward charitably

presented me with £5, which he begged might be distributed amongst a few poor, but deserving prisoners on their discharge. Now, if the reader will take the pains to refer to the interesting novel of 'Paul Clifford,' he will there perceive how the artifices of my impatient flock have been enriched by description, and adapted to the requirements of a tale of fiction. Their futile inventions have been elaborated into a successful effort, and the machinations of lawless minds contribute, in their degree, to the truthful delineation of exciting incidents, whose verisimilitude tends to instruct mankind, as well as to enrich the pages of romance.

Sir Edward Bulwer repaid his obligation to myself personally, by an eulogistic note, which, from such a pen, I treasure as a flattering compliment. There was, indeed, little merit in my communicativeness, for I was enticed into amplification by observing how much the subject piqued the curiosity of my auditor. I shall have something to say hereafter on the subject of escapes, but shall now merely observe that in proportion as industrial occupa-

tions amongst prisoners are promoted must their appliances abound, and hence some hazard to safe custody is incurred by the very implements of usefulness.

It has already been recorded that want of space compelled us to place three prisoners in each cell for the night. The occupation of one cell by only two male prisoners, was interdicted by law. At that period there was no restraint upon conversation, either by day or night, and many were the painful proofs we were forced to receive of the demoralizing effects of that intercourse.

It was my early practice to arm myself with keys, and with noiseless tread to wander through the long passages of the males' prison, stopping to listen to some of the many conversations which wiled away the time of the numerous tios. By this process I reaped much curious knowledge. First, I thus became familiar with the language, singular terms, and revolting phraseology of abandoned reprobates. Secondly, I became imperceptibly admitted into their secret confidence, and was often appalled by the intense wickedness of

their revelations. Thirdly, I discovered the strange variety of characters and sentiments which here became intermingled ; and, lastly, sympathy was occasionally extorted by the remorse openly avowed by some stray penitent, and the heart melted at the touching sentiments fearlessly enunciated by some one erring man more bold and reflective than the rest.

All men are engrossed by their own especial pursuits and occupations, and their conversation naturally tends towards them. Thieves form no exception to this rule, but dilate freely upon their exploits, and the booty they have thereby acquired. Amongst their fellow depredators they do not observe the caution to disguise the names of the plundered, or the places in which they have successfully marauded. Nor are they often betrayed. Except in cases of imminent danger to themselves personally, the great majority maintain a discreet silence, and let nothing transpire injurious to a comrade.

I can, however, recall two instances in which this forbearance was discarded ; in the

former case without any prospect of individual gain, and, in the latter, to gratify a spirit of revenge.

A swell-thief formed one of three in a sleeping-cell, where he nightly sought to amuse his companions by the narration of his *finesse*. Amongst other adroit feats he had availed himself of some habitual remissness observable in the closing of doors at the chambers then occupied by Lord William Lennox, upon whom he had successfully practised a series of robberies. These depredations had been so frequent, and the articles abstracted so numerous, that at length his lordship—deeply perplexed by the enigma of their disappearance—began reluctantly to suspect his own servant, and was rendered most uncomfortable by his suspicions. The tact of the robber and his success had too much elated him to allow of their suppression, and, therefore, he made in the cell an open boast of his adroitness, and laughed heartily at the expense of his dupes. One of the occupants of the same cell, from whatever motive it may have been, although some notion of recti-



tude seemed to influence his conduct, communicated the facts first to the chief-turnkey, and subsequently allowed me to commit to writing the full particulars derived from the conversation he had heard.

A note from me to Lord William Lennox relieved his mind from a load of anxiety upon that subject, and brought him promptly to the prison. Due inquiry was instituted; some of the stolen property was discovered, and traced to the delinquent, who, on his release, was apprehended and re-committed upon this fresh charge. The case was fully proved against him, and he was, consequently, convicted at the Middlesex sessions, where his character as a notorious thief entailed upon him a sentence of transportation, the joint reward of his misdeeds, and of his own garrulity.

The next case is one, the recollection of which has always strongly impressed me with the quaint and singular character of the whole event. A youth, whom I full well knew as a common thief, and who, in that capacity, had been my frequent visitor, had but a few days preceding the occurrence which I am about to

relate, re-entered the prison, to undergo a fresh sentence. He was about nineteen years' of age, extremely ignorant, had a slouching, awkward gait, was of a light complexion, had a thick, shaggy head of flaxen hair, and eyes emitting a remarkable expression—for both were of strange shape, and disclosed an unwonted squint. He was at work on the treadmill when I was announced to be in the yard, and, as was his privilege, came down to address me. Shuffling up to me, with knit brows, and uttering a preliminary grunt, he thus begun—"If you please, sir, there are a cove in the London Bridewell, vot are escaped from transportation ;" and in the same form of speech he proceeded to describe the name now assumed by the fugitive, the place of original conviction, and all other particulars necessary to ensure his restoration to the hulk from which he had flown. I lost no time in conveying the needful intelligence into the proper quarter, and learned that the whole statement was found to be strictly true ; and, in consequence, all the requisite arrangements were made to arrest the future flight of the culprit.

This sort of denunciation was of such rare occurrence, that I became curious to learn the motives by which the informer had been actuated ; and, accordingly, when I had told him that we had ascertained the truth of his communication, I asked him pointedly—“ But why have you split upon him ? ” I shall never forget the strange and unearthly contortions which seemed suddenly to seize him. He began to writhe and struggle ; his chest heaved convulsively ; his face assumed a livid hue, and, after an apparent inward struggle, he exclaimed, in a voice suppressed with rage—“ Vy, sir, he had summat to say to a gal o'mine, vile I vor in pris'n ! ”

I was remarkably struck by this rare incident. It exhibited the vilest workings of selfish depravity in the very lowest order of human beings. Thenceforth I watched that fellow with the interest attaching to the motions of some curious reptile. Such a specimen of mankind was scarce. It was hardly to be found amongst the varied deformities of character, which it was hourly my lot to contemplate in a host of vicious out-

casts. In the usual lapse of time—a short average period—I lost sight of this varlet, as of others of his habits, and doubtless he, equally with the rest of the besotted crew, reaped the only recompense which served to crown their guilty labours—transportation, or protracted penal servitude.

Returning from a digression, intended to illustrate the present portion of my subject, I recur to the promiscuous conversations to which I stealthily listened in the crowded cells. From them I gathered the predominant dread of treadwheel labour amongst the ‘reputed thieves’ of that day. At that time, the subject had been discussed in the ‘Prison Discipline Society,’ a body composed of volunteer philanthropists; and the quantum of treadwheel labour to be exacted, was the fruit of their recommendation. In utter ignorance of the mischief which an excess of such exertion produced, they apportioned to each male individual 12,000 feet of ascent per diem. That ratio was excessive, and proved seriously injurious to health, especially under the circumstances of a diet restricted to the minimum of what was deemed adequate requirement.

The prison surgeons had, to be sure, in their hands the discretion of exemption, but experience ultimately taught us that the disastrous consequences of this prolonged toil became suddenly apparent. The most robust frames would become attenuated ; until a prolonged indulgence in a daily allowance of beer, increased diet, and, in many instances, other prescribed stimulants hardly sufficed to arrest the mischief. So debilitating were the results of the undue amount of such dispiriting labour, that (before the erection of military prisons) the Royal Artillery abstained from consigning their offending men to Cold Bath Fields, owing to the injurious effects observable, on their return to the regiment, from the mischievous excess of treadwheel occupation.

In due time, every authority had become impressed with the error committed on his head, and the reduction of the daily task by 4,500 feet, together with an enlarged diet, tended to establish a ratio of penal labour which proved both safe and salutary.

My experience has convinced me that it is a great mistake to refine as largely as many well-

disposed, but super-sensitive people insist to be advisable, and to abolish such instruments as the treadmill. Although the error is unquestionably committed on the right side, still, there is no doubt that the care, and comfort, and solid diet bestowed upon prisoners, tend to strip imprisonment of much of its salutary terrors. At least one-third of the population of London prisons is composed of abandoned individuals, who wilfully turned a deaf ear to all monition, and pursue a life of crime in order to court imaginary ease and self-indulgence, and to secure what has been significantly termed 'the easy penny.'

All who have studied the subject have been made painfully aware of the serious obstacles which beset the liberated criminal who aspires to regain an honest reputation ; but the charitable reflections applicable to those unhappy specimens of struggling humanity are quite misapplied, and become superfluous sentimentalism, when extended to the stubborn and impenitent votaries of crime. Such persons do not distract their brains with any portion of the theme of reformation. They doggedly

reject the whole subject, and obstinately pursue a career of vice, without encouraging one single repentant reflection. I could illustrate this assertion by many an instructive fact, but knowing too well its truthfulness, I insist that, to discard the treadmill, and to dispense with all kinds of penal labour, is neither just to the honest, nor politic, as regards society at large. It is only a fitting retribution to impose upon the callous and voluntary thief a distasteful occupation; and, although in the course of many years I have been forced to listen to an immense amount of mawkish theory upon this head, I have never swerved from an opinion which I still avow. With a laudable desire to give encouragement to the hopeful novice in crime, it is a beneficial principle, as part of a great question, to apply wholesome severity to the hardened reprobate.

As a rule, I advocate a penal initiation for all, gradually expanding into an occupation which tends to interest the mind, and ultimately to realize productiveness. Thus the better man is taught to experience the poignant sting of guilt, and, in his thoroughly humbled

condition, at length gratefully to appreciate an elevation from its deepest degeneracy into a condition useful and promising, and which seems to point prospectively to a disenthralment from the worst and most degraded association, in all its distinctive forms. Thence, he may hopefully contemplate a re-union with those classes eminent for honour and probity, to which, if it were only from past recollections, he will desire henceforth to attach himself.

In hazarding these reflections, I am speaking from practical observation. I feel and know the truth of what I allege. And here I may instructively recite a fact, confirmatory of the foregoing views. A well-educated and most intelligent young man, a member of the College of Surgeons, who had undergone six months' imprisonment as a felon, had been subject to the process which I have here advocated. Within a day or two of his discharge, he spoke to me, in the most impressive terms, of his past errors, his sufferings, and humiliation ; and, breathing the utmost gratitude for treatment, such as I have described it, used



these emphatic words—"If it were not for the brand of 'felon,' I should rejoice in what I have undergone here. I feel to have received a most useful lesson, and that I shall become a better man, in consequence, hereafter." That young man had been assistant to a gentleman, whom I personally knew, in a most extensive practice, within four miles of London. I could adduce many other such confirmatory examples.

So much for the tread-wheel, which, in my earlier days of prison government, inspired the liveliest apprehensions; such, indeed, as needed all the strongest terms of a non-descript glossary to define. One young fellow, unsuspecting of the listener to whom his inmost thoughts were thus poured out, was, in his way, quite impassioned in the description of the alarm which he and others had experienced, from the simple narrative of those who had already tested that harrassing labour. Nor did the realization, as he averred, belie his expectations.

Here, also, I learned how these professional marauders would descant upon the varied

penalties attached to specific offences. As traders might, in social converse, be supposed to canvass the probable gains of commerce, and the possible loss or profit of different kinds of goods, so would these fellows familiarly discuss the several sentences, usually awaiting the divers delinquencies within the scope of their own practices. Thus, 'six months,' 'twelve months,' 'seven years,' and so on, were as frequently recited, in their estimate of criminal adventures, as would the per centage of profit or discount be recounted in the discussion of mercantile transactions. In short, I found myself in the midst of a society distinctly *sui generis*, a separate offshoot from the con-fraternity of citizens; a class furnished with its own language, rules, and sympathies, standing widely apart from every other portion of society, which it deemed it a duty and triumph to despoil.

The chaplain of the prison was wont to address his erring congregation in strong, homely language, delivered extempore. He strictly embraced the injunction of the prophet, to "cry aloud and spare not;" and I

was soon made aware that his severe denunciations often incensed his hearers. He, like all the other superior officers, had a nickname applied to him. The 'screwsmen' (turnkeys) were, I imagine, too numerous for such a distinction. One evening, I was edified by a discussion, within a cell, upon the preaching of 'Old Roger' (the chaplain's sobriquet), which the consulting worthies mercilessly criticised and denounced. They all agreed that it would be 'fine fun' to have Old Roger pitted against a fellow whom they designated 'Tom,' with whose scepticism and eloquence they seemed to be mightily impressed. There was much merriment exhausted over this ticklish topic, and the upshot was the expression of their unanimous conviction that the parson would have no chance whatever with Tom, but would be pitilessly 'floored,' and, in short, discomfited as signally as every species of unseemly phrase could be interpreted to demolish him.

Sometimes—though, unhappily, rarely—it was my lot to listen to reflections which denoted penitence. One evening, I heard a most

impressive lecture on the evils of drunkenness from the lips of a man named Peacock, who had descended from the comfortable position of a thriving mechanic to be the frequent inmate of a prison, owing to that ruinous addiction. On the occasion of his last summary conviction at Worship Street, Mr. Broughton, the police magistrate, had addressed him in a tone of earnest expostulation, and had traced in glowing terms, the respectability he might have realized in lieu of the rags and wretchedness that then distinguished him.

Peacock felt gratefully Mr. Broughton's humane appeal to him, recapitulated the identical words, and bewailed the wretched predilection which, as he expressed it, "for a few scalding drops of worthless liquor, debased the man beneath the brute, and pursued him with such insatiable craving, that although aware of the fatality, he would rush with his eyes open, upon certain ruin, rather than forego the draught."

Peacock was a man of marked intelligence, and spoke with fervent eloquence. As he was

no thief, but used simply to be hurried into breaches of the peace, through the frenzy of intoxication, and as I shortly, after this burst of creditable sentiment, lost sight of him, it is to be hoped that he applied his reasoning faculties to a righteous end, and became a sober man and useful artizan.

I need hardly affirm how loathsome were the discourses which almost universally shocked my senses, nor how complete an absence of any but the worst intelligence I was compelled to note. One young fellow, scarcely twenty years of age, who had assumed the name of 'Bullock,' employed, in every sentence he uttered, so undefinable an intermixture of overstrained oaths, and filthy phraseology, that a literal report of his conversation would absolutely create a sensation in every decent circle. I question, indeed, if ordinary minds would not conceive that I had invented some loathsome fiction to palm off upon the credulous reader. That young miscreant openly professed his intention to seize the earliest opportunity to commit an abandoned crime, for he swore by a variety of obscene oaths, it was his

ambition to essay every species of wickedness that he could possibly commit. I also heard another youth exclaim, "Lord how I do love thieving! If I had thousands, I'd still be a thief!"

These samples of depravity convey, doubtless, grief, and sickening aversion to those of moral and religious principles; but in the analysis of a complicated mass of criminal data it is indispensable to adduce some such disgusting facts, since facts they are, or to leave the extent of crime unrevealed, and the reader uninformed as to the real condition of the outcast classes in every city cursed with a superabundant population.

Happily, I can close this portion of my subject, by citing a case which it is grateful to contemplate. My evening stroll through those long stone passages brought me into casual acquaintance with a young man imprisoned for theft, whose probity of heart led him to contend with two hardened companions in the same cell, for the superior claims of integrity. First, he averred, that prostration and want, the consequences of severe illness,

had alone impelled him to commit the act for which he was then suffering.

Of course his companions ridiculed his scruples, and advocated the exercise of general spoliation, when, as a retort upon some baneful avowal, the young man exclaimed, "Surely you would not rob a poor countryman who might arrive in town with only a few shillings in his pocket?" On hearing this, one of the knavish disputants turned lazily round in his crib, and, after stretching himself, and yawning audibly, he exclaimed, "By God Almighty, I'd rob my own father, if I could get a shilling by him!" His fellow vagabond hailed this filial sentiment with a hoarse laugh, while I, having noted the number of the cell, left them for the night.

On the following day I summoned before me these debaters, and giving free scope to my contempt for the two reprobates, I gathered with much interest the history of the third. He was a manufacturer and hawker of brooms and brushes; a calling by which, when blest with health, he assured me, he realized an

ample livelihood. Long confinement in a hospital, and a state of great debility when discharged, had reduced him to extremity, and impelled him to the commission of theft. My questions elicited the fact that fifteen shillings on his discharge, would again set him up in the world, and the case having been related to the visiting justices, they kindly authorized that sum to be given to him. A few months afterwards I casually met the poor fellow in Hatton Garden bearing on his shoulder a pole well stocked with brooms and brushes, and with a grateful expression of acknowledgement, he assured me he was a thriving man.



## CHAPTER XI.

IMPOLITIC DISTRIBUTION OF CLOTHES—VIOLENT  
WOMEN—A ROBBERY AND ITS RESULTS.

AMONGST other abuses which it became necessary to reform, was the most absurd and mischievous extension of a principle, originally based upon humanity, of distributing clothing to discharged prisoners. Those who were zealous to promote reformation, had wisely discerned how little chance of employment awaited a ragged and shoeless object, just expelled from prison. The salutary operation of that rule required care to select hopeful recipients of such bounty, and discrimination to sift a combination of concurrent circum-

stances affording grounds for anticipating favourable results. It had never been the intention so profusely to shower down these gifts upon the worthless, as to constitute a positive premium upon crime.

That, however, was just exactly what distinguished the every-day custom. Every vicious thief, abandoned prostitute, and worthless vagrant, discharged after a short incarceration, would receive good shoes, and an ample supply of clothing, only to consign such eleemosynary presents to the slopseller, or pawnbroker, spend the proceeds in drink and rioting, and revisit the prison in a denuded state, to be again shortly released with similar unmerited advantages.

When I began to inquire into the origin of this most wasteful and pernicious system, I was told, with a face of pseudo-benevolence, that it was the order of the committee that 'every poor creature' should have a chance of reformation by being decently clad. The utmost surprise was expressed, by the matron in particular, at my dissent from such an abuse of good intentions. However, I

promptly forbade any future issue of this kind, except under my own express authority.

I discovered that most of the numerous low street-walkers would deliberately demolish a pane of glass, whenever she coveted a refit, or desired her linen to be washed and got up, for that also was an habitual observance in the prison. By a proper exposure before the committee, of the unwise stretch of a wholesome regulation, orders, properly defined, were drawn up, and I was made the judge of the expediency of such an extension of charity, unless the magistrates themselves should see grounds for interference in any special case.

Moreover, it now became an imperative rule that all convicted persons, without exception, should be required to wear the prison-dress, and the late capricious practice of giving it to some, partially clothing others, and withholding it from the majority, was totally extinguished.

Again, the most wanton destruction of the prison-bedding and clothing had prevailed. No one had deemed it a duty to enforce any discreet care of them, and that habitual neg-

lect encouraged speculation, waste, and misapplication. I instituted a weekly inspection, and made each prisoner accountable for the articles committed to his care. The officers were forbidden to apply (as heretofore) any of the county property to their own use ; and the fruits of all these reasonable measures soon became apparent.

It is no less curious than gratifying to mark the economical results of this common-sense administration, and I think I may be reasonably proud of details which testify to the marvellous and beneficial economy derivable from this enforcement of practicable care ; and, be it remembered, I only illustrate one branch of expenditure.

I adduce two sets of figures demonstrative of the different administration of two equal periods, viz., the seven years preceding my appointment, and the seven years subsequent to it. To arrive at a sound conclusion, I took the trouble to extract the contract prices during both periods, and found them to be slightly *against* the latter period.

From the 30th of September, 1822, to

Michaelmas, 1829, form a term of seven years under the old *régime*, and from the 30th of September, 1829, to Michaelmas, 1836, a second period under the amended system.

	Number of Prisoners.	Total cost of Bedding and Clothing.
1st period of 7 years .....	35,550 ...	£11,116 9s. 4d.
2nd period of 7 years ...	66,771 ...	9,871 19 9

giving a diminished expenditure of £1244 9s 7d, and a comparative saving to the public of £10,507 5s 4d.<sup>1</sup>

These figures have been frequently set forth, and I have challenged an examination into their accuracy. I now again attest their correctness, and I claim the merit of services thus rendered.

<sup>1</sup> Another feature in this comparative summary renders the fact still more striking. In the years 1832 and 1833, when the cholera so fiercely and fatally raged in the prison, all the clothing and bedding used by the sufferers were, under medical advice, destroyed by fire. Thus property to a great amount was sacrificed. Before that destruction had been resorted to, it was found that every person engaged in the scouring, or washing, or baking, such infected clothing was seized with cholera in its most hopeless form, and before the fatality was discovered many died.

In order still further to illustrate the fraudulent stratagems then abounding in a prison where the collusion of functionaries, and even artizans, ministered to each others gains, I have only to cite a very remarkable piece of chicanery, which, for a time, continued without my critical observation. The principal light to the large chapel in the old building is derived from a skylight, of conical form, which appears to rise abruptly from the roof. There were frequent fractures of the glass, and upon such occasions the glazier—a neighbouring tradesman—was called in, and he invariably came attended by men bearing a huge builders' ladder, to reach the roof from without, with several shorter ladders and a few planks and ropes. By such aid, and the construction of a sort of platform, the skylight appeared to be reached, and the repairs effected. The charge was, of course, something very considerable ; and as I had observed a trap-door in the roof of the chapel, I enquired why it should not be made use of for the requisite purpose. The answer was given with the most serious countenance, and, in very emphatic terms. " God

bless your soul, sir, you have no idea of the danger of getting at that skylight ! It is only to be approached as we approach it, and then, without the greatest caution, a man is in danger of falling through, and being dashed to pieces !”

Not having for a moment suspected a deception upon such a point, I suffered the matter to pass by, not without some wonderment at so strange a construction, until one day a consultation with Mr. Sims led him to essay the trap-door, and to see and judge of the alleged necessity for the long ladder and exorbitant charges ; when, lo ! the whole scheme was found to be a rascally contrivance to pocket money dishonestly. *Ex uno disce omnes !* There was no end to the *finesse* and subterfuge to which resort was had to cheat and defraud ; and the eyes of Argus would have been barely sufficient to discover the machinations pervading every quarter of the establishment.

By progressive stages, and with such lights as then existed, we began to set an example of systematic discipline and order. Still, so long as unlimited communication amongst

prisoners was tolerated, there was an endless stimulus given to turbulence. The mischievous were always exciting the rash and thoughtless to commit some excess, and thus necessarily to entail upon themselves punishment. The struggle, therefore, between rebellion and authority was productive of serious embarrassment. The latter was always stoutly upheld ; but the pains to ensure its supremacy were ceaseless, and destructive of tranquillity. With an ever-shifting population we had the vexation to perceive that no sooner was one insubordinate spirit subdued, than another succeeded, and would, mayhap, surpass the former in pugnacity. Indeed, from the reminiscence of all the turmoil and demoralization, at that time extant, I contemplate with horror the condition of a prison in which unrestricted intercourse is allowed to prevail.

The most vicious portion of the female prisoners, generally some seven or eight in number, out of an average of 250 female convicts, would present an everlasting source of turbulence and rioting. They constituted a singular example of what may be produced



by very early self-indulgence and neglect. They were creatures inaccessible, for the most part, either to reason or kindness. Any momentary effusion of tenderness would be stifled, in order to maintain the vain-glorious boast of 'pluck.' The merest approach to reproof would kindle a burst of rage; thence would follow such a volley of oaths, such terms of defiance, and (as necessity compelled their forcible removal) such boundless pugnacity and fierce resistance, that the spectator would wonder whether the contest could be with devils or with women. These human pests would endure lengthened and painful punishments, live unrepiningly upon bread and water in solitude, and disdainfully reject the easy terms of release—viz., the promise to be well conducted.

Bridget Summers, aged 18 years, who used to enter the prison, alternately, as a disorderly girl from the streets, and as a refractory pauper from a workhouse, persisted so long in her 'plucky' determination, answering daily remonstrance, and even entreaties, with contumely and frightful execrations, that, at

length, we were constrained to remove her from the punishment cell by force, to obviate serious consequences. In that instance she maintained her character with her unfeminine companions for 'pluck,' but she profited by the lesson of her own voluntary suffering, and thenceforth observed a discreet line of conduct in any of the prisons—for she was an *habituée* of most in turn.

A retrospect upon these unique samples of vicious character recalls the strange anomalies which marked their course of action. With reference to Bridget Summers, after the foregoing incident, as I was walking, at mid-day, in company with two ladies, through Covent Garden, I suddenly met this girl with an apparently decent working woman. She noticed me with a face full of smiles, when, informing the ladies that she was one of my unruly clients, I stopped to speak to her. She displayed towards me the utmost gentleness and good will, thanked me civilly for my inquiries respecting her condition, told me she was doing well 'at shelling in the market,' and, curtseying, took a gracious leave of me.

Her friend and general companion, Harriet Knight, a girl about the same age, and of the identical stamp, was a very remarkable specimen of the *genus fœmina*. She had been fully as contumacious as Summers, and had voluntarily courted nearly an equal amount of punishment, until admonished by endurance she began to practice quietude. I was compelled to instruct the superintendents never to speak to her unless required to do so by urgent necessity, and in case of unusual excitement to leave her to me. I failed to succeed myself; nor did I witness the least success on the part of any other person (not even one out of the select number of ladies, who charitably visited female prisoners) to assuage the sour disposition of that literally spiteful girl. She was a matchless cynic; snarling and angry retort, even when she was kindly addressed, seemed with her an instinct. Experience taught me that the only safe course to pursue towards Harriet Knight was to let her alone, and neither to speak to nor notice her at all. She would then sometimes go through her term with sullen taciturnity,

and receive her discharge with a look of ineffable scorn and contempt.

The newspapers of that day abounded with the pugilistic exploits of a woman who had rendered herself notorious under the name of 'Lady Barrymore.' Her real name was Mary Ann Pearce ; and she was one of those persons who when drunk are frantic, and was a most formidable object either to apprehend or, indeed, safely to place at the bar of the police office.

When sober and in prison, 'Lady Barrymore' was not addicted to overt resistance ; but, under the system of free license to speak, she was always counselling mischief to others. She was a woman of unusually high stature, and had, doubtless, been, when young, and under the protection of the Lord Barrymore of that time, a very fine woman. She had then had a carriage kept for her, but was ultimately discarded, and, bit by bit, became a drunken street-walker.

To the ignorant women, who surrounded her, she made boast of her former finery and sumptuous style, and was amongst them a

sort of dictatress upon rank and fashion. She exercised, consequently, no small influence, which was always turned to the detriment of my authority, for I found her to be a zealous fomenter of broils and resistance. At length, by a mere accident, I discovered a ready means to master her mischievous disposition. Whenever there was aught amiss in her ward, she had been ever prompt to interfere, and, when reproved, delighted to remind me, and all who listened, of her former greatness. "I am no common person, like most in this prison. I once kept my own servants, and rode in my own carriage!" Irritated by this constant absurd reiteration, I one day said to her—"I am afraid you are something worse than a common person, for the law has sent you here as a common prostitute;" and I desired an officer to go forthwith to the office and bring me her commitment, that I might read the precise terms for her edification, and that of her imprisoned associates.

The blow to her pride was instantaneous. She became pale, and seemed about to swoon

with horror. She gasped for breath, and, in the utmost horror, exclaimed—"For God's sake don't, sir—oh, for God's sake, don't!"

Thenceforth, the merest hint sufficed to silence her, and under the dread of losing caste, in my presence she became a pattern of meekness.

One of the outrageous women, who at this epoch so tormented us was a creature named 'Fowler,' who had won the infamous distinction of being considered the most foul spoken woman of all who infested the prisons of the metropolis. She had been a housemaid in the family of a literary countess, but having descended to vicious courses, her numerous bad qualities soon made her pre-eminent in abandonment. The trait of character which secures a freshness in my memory for this degraded being, is in itself somewhat amusing.

It was her custom to load me with ceaseless vituperation, and upon all such occasions, while she disparaged me to the utmost, she never failed to contrast the superior excellence of Mr. Nodder—a very worthy man, who was then governor of Tothill Fields Prison—and

whose duty it was frequently to receive charge of Fowler. "Ah"! she would shriek out, with ill-stifled rage, "you're a pretty tyrant of a governor; you're not like Mr. Nodder: Mr. Nodder is a *gentleman*."! &c. &c. I took but little heed of this uncivil contrast, but it would sometimes perplex my mind to imagine what line of conduct Mr. Nodder could possibly adopt with this fierce virago, so to win her favourable opinion.

One day, I chanced to call upon Mr Nodder, who asked me, with seeming curiosity, how I could manage to conciliate 'that horrible wretch Fowler,' since she always lauded me to the echo, declared me to be a 'gentleman,' while he was denounced as quite the reverse. To our mutual amusement, we found, that these most extraordinary tactics were resorted to in either prison, as a sort of calming ebullition to Miss Fowler's implacable fury when under confinement.

Persons of this description, who always proved violent and untameable, were happily only few when compared with those of gentle disposition. Indeed, as I have before remarked,

whenever these distressing outbursts occurred, the agitation and alarm, the sobs and tears that convulsed an overwhelming majority of these poor creatures showed, that even a life of wild licentiousness, could not, with all its demoralizing tendencies, divest most women of their inborn gentleness of heart. For the honour of human nature this fact should never be forgotten. So many kind and amiable traits would shine forth, so much docility, cordial good-will, and grateful demonstration would adorn very many of these outcast daughters of affliction, that apart from their unhappy position you might almost be led to esteem them.

The monsters in female shape were the exceptions, but to their hateful qualities language fails to render complete justice. I have witnessed scenes of such terrific violence, arising from the reckless brutality of one or two desperate women, that the matron, all the female attendants, and every female prisoner, except the one or two infuriated combatants, have exhibited paroxysms of grief and terror, and shed such copious tears, that it became a



touching spectacle for any man to witness their agony.

At the period of unrestrained communication amongst prisoners, a girl named Duthoid, aged about twenty years, of comely face and well-proportioned frame, maintained so resolute a fight with all the male officers who could possibly be detached to subdue her, that nothing within those walls could ever compare with that combat. Her strength proved to be enormous, and her spirit indomitable, but while she and other such termagants did their utmost to inflict injury, the men, on the contrary, were always enjoined to overcome the rebel woman without dealing out hurtful blows. The poor fellows were sometimes sorely punished, but their forbearance in every such encounter was really most laudable. The agitation that prevailed within that ward was most impressive. Many of the prisoners fainted, and the red and swollen eyes of all, throughout that day, attested their excessive emotion.

The girl, Duthoid, who had caused this memorable sensation, was then under a sen-

tence of one year's imprisonment. She had to endure a considerable amount of solitary confinement, to atone for her very grave misconduct, and she became ashamed of her unwomanly excess. From that time forth, to the end of her term, she observed exemplary conduct; and the chief female turnkey, who, subsequently to the outrage, conceived in consequence of her penitence an interest in her, assured me she was "a good-hearted girl." This is another amongst innumerable examples of the results of a mother's early neglect to restrain an unruly temper.

There were not wanting occasions in which the rejection of authority displayed itself in the most amusing form, and one, in particular, surpassed most others in the rare comicality of its details.

We were compelled from want of space to place many prisoners in one sleeping-room. About the period of which I am now treating, we were tormented by the flippant impertinence of a very young girl named Lacy, who was not more than seventeen years of age, of very slender form, and possessing a thin, sal-

low countenance. Having very early embraced a vicious career, she was thoroughly versed in all the wickedness of her craft, and was, moreover, a girl of exceeding bad temper.

On a summer evening, fourteen 'disorderly' girls were consigned to one room, and amongst that number was Lacy, to whom the retiring turnkey had given some offence before she locked the door. When this knot of vicious young hussies had been left to themselves, Lacy's rage boiled over, and she incited the rest to join her in overt violence to revenge the affront she had received. The general destruction of the windows promptly ensued, whilst shouts and menaces added to the uproar.

I was very soon apprized of the mutiny, and summoned Mr. Sims and the night-guard of male turnkeys to hasten to the spot, and there to single out the delinquents. It is, perhaps, needless to say that no female superintendent would have dared—alone and unsupported—to confront her charge whilst thus excited. In relating what ensued, I must beg pardon of the over scrupulous, if I

am compelled, as a truthful historian, to call things by their common names, since I know not otherwise how to convey a notion of the scene.

As we approached the room, which stood at the extremity of a long passage, our ears were assailed by the angry shrieks and vociferations of the young furies, who, divested of their upper garments, stood simply in their *chemises de nuit*. In the compulsory interference of the men with the women's department, all practicable decorum was strictly observed; in this instance, however, there was no alternative but—as the female attendant opened the door—to rush in and bring forth the ring-leaders, unless a voluntary surrender should obviate the employment of hostile measures.

I stood at the end of the passage while Sims advanced, and as a demand to yield and to come out as they were called, proved unavailing, the door was opened. The first object that caught the eye was the frail form of Lacy, who, as the prime inciter, led the van. With an indispensable utensil brandished as a weapon in the right hand, while she encouragingly

waved the other, she exclaimed, in a loud voice—"Now, if you're girls, follow me!" Thus saying, she rushed boldly on Sims, only to be instantly overpowered and secured. As usual in cases of overt resistance, the rest became alarmed, burst into tears, and calmly submitted.

In order to overcome the scepticism of many readers who might be led to doubt whether a young girl of seventeen years of age, and a prisoner, could possess the hardihood thus to act; I tender my solemn assurance that there is not one iota of exaggeration in the narrative I have given. The whole occurrence was fraught with ludicrous accompaniments, and caused as much after-merriment.

Lacy subsequently married some low vagabond, named Goswell, and in that name she became notorious in the Bridewell of Westminster, as an untameable vixen, whose excesses of violence and utter disregard of all decency, made her a serious nuisance to the governor, and more especially to the matron and all females who exercised authority there.

A circumstance arose about this juncture

which exemplifies the proverb *Quis Deus vult perdere prius dementat*. A warder, named Summersell, was a man careful of his expenditure, and desirous to lay by some money. Amongst other acts of economy, he contrived to save the cost of a lodging by nightly occupying a bed in the lodge of the prison, and thus allowing one of the night-watch to leave the prison, and sleep at his own residence—a privilege to which most aspired. Summersell's box occupied a corner of the lodge, and in it were stored up more than thirty sovereigns. Strange to say, a man so careful to hoard was careless to secure his treasure; and, with unaccountable negligence, habitually failed to lock his box.

The lodge, equally with every other portion of the establishment (except the governor's house), was cleaned by some prisoner, who, in this quarter, was called lodge-man, and who, in the course of routing and dusting about, detected the warder's unsecured box, and resolved to pry into its contents. By that means he detected the unguarded gold, and dishonestly designed to appropriate it to his

own use. He had access to the centre of the grounds where cinders, &c., were deposited; and, taking with him the money, he sought to inter it in some unknown spot, until he could concoct a scheme for its safe withdrawal.

There chanced, however, to be an aged prisoner, then at work in the garden, who so watched (without any distinct suspicion of aught unusual) the dishonest lodge-man, that the latter found it impossible, unobserved, to conceal the money, which, however, it might frustrate his intentions to take back. He imparted his scheme, therefore, to the other, and proposed a joint transaction, and ultimate division of the spoil, to which the latter gladly assented.

The aged *particeps criminis* was a sturdy pauper of Chelsea parish, who had long idly subsisted on the poor-rate (under the old *régime*), and was, moreover, turbulent and violent towards its administrators, whom he constantly assailed with foul abuse, and at length with blows. An indictment for an assault on an overseer had consigned him to

Cold Bath Fields for nine months ; and failing health, caused his employment in the open air. It ultimately transpired, that the two scoundrels had arranged that the lodge-man (first to be discharged), when free, should indicate, at a safe hour, by some concerted signal, that he was outside the wall, and that his coadjutor should disinter the spoil, and throw it over to him. The latter, however, having no security that he should really share the booty, was revolving other tactics in his own mind, when Summersell discovered his loss, and a vast commotion became the consequence. The lodge-man was removed *instanter*, though nothing could be substantiated against him ; some vague suspicion attaching also to the pauper, he was sent away from the garden, and effectually debarred from access to the cash, or counsel with his partner in guilt. At length, hopeless of any profit to himself, he divulged the secret, and pointed out the spot where the money was buried ; so that Summersell had the rare good fortune to recover his lost gold.

The pauper had, it seemed, given his ad-



dress in Chelsea to the lodge-man, who, on his discharge, visited the wife, and maintained friendly relations, notwithstanding that he had waited without the wall, and made the preconcerted signals in vain. At length the pauper was also discharged; and, on telling his tale, was thoroughly discredited by the other, and mutual exasperation ensued. The ex-lodgeman believed that he had been duped by the ex-gardener, and that the other had clutched the spoil, and tricked him out of his share.

In this phase of the transaction, the original thief drank too deeply; and, while his brain was thus mystified, resolved to be revenged upon the faithless pauper; so, with a loud knock, he assailed the prison gate, and reeled in to confer with the governor. His narration was delivered with characteristic indistinctness, but it still constituted a full confession, and combined a charge of robbery against the pauper. The governor, however, already in possession of the veritable facts, sent forthwith for a police constable, to whom was delivered the drunken self-accuser. The ordinary forms

of law were observed, the pauper was produced as a witness, and the case having been fully established, the ex-lodgeman was visited with the sentence of seven years' transportation, into which, indeed, he had so blindly rushed.

A singular feature in the prosecution was the necessity for describing the locality of the robbery, and for that purpose of laying the offence as committed 'in the dwelling-house of George Laval Chesterton,' which appeared to be the legal definition of every portion of that vast prison.

## CHAPTER XII.

POLITICAL PRISONERS — THE PRISON THREATENED —  
THE CHOLERA, AND THE INCIDENTS IT EVOKED—  
ORIGIN OF THE TREADWHEEL.

IN the year 1830, the extreme Radical party bade open defiance to the exactions of the Stamp Act, and a large body of lawless politicians became actively engaged in the sale of unstamped newspapers. Vast numbers were apprehended for this infringement of the law ; and, on summary conviction, were consigned to my custody. The rigid enforcement of the act seemed only to provoke a more extended violation of it, until I began to number a considerable body of these restless opinionists,

who were all excited partizans, under my rule. Many of them were really good-tempered, and even facetious declaimers on popular rights, whose erratic ideas and mental dreaminess were of a very unusual stamp, and quite explained the visionary nature of their political creed. They delighted to call themselves 'working men,' although they were unlike the general mass of working men, but still their letters often displayed much ingenuity and playful humour, notwithstanding their privation of liberty.

One of those political 'martyrs' (so they styled themselves) was a young man of quaint character, and very original turn of mind, named Walker. He combined much bashful simplicity, with a deal of innate comic shrewdness, and in the early part of his imprisonment, he wrote in a vein so sportively sedate to Hetherington (the Radical publisher of the *Poor Man's Guardian*, and other somewhat rabid prints) that I have always regretted not to have kept a copy of that unique production. It commenced, "Dear Guardy," and assumed the form of a 'last will and testament.'

Premising that he might possibly die in a prison, he was solicitous in that event to assign his mortal remains to philanthropic purposes. He therefore prayed that his body might be sent for anatomical inspection, with the proviso, that every portion of his frame should be devoted to public utility, in some shape or other. His hair he bequeathed to any honest plasterer who would use it in the mixture of mortar ; his teeth (white and regular) might be sold to a skilful dentist, and the proceeds serve to augment some patriotic fund, designed to vindicate and advance 'the people's rights.' With the most humorous minuteness, he dissected his own remains, allotting to its several parts what he deemed appropriate uses. The extravagant specification reached its climax, however, in the bequest of his sinews to be converted into 'fiddle-strings,' and thus, haply, tend to enliven those enslaved citizens who might be groaning under the influence of monarchical despotism.

The perusal of that singular epistle first directed my attention towards the writer, whom I found to be a tall, meagre, pale

young man, with a bright and benevolent countenance, but withal timid and retiring. He appeared to be of feeble constitution, and in that respect he excited my sympathy.

I was myself the bearer of that letter to Hetherington, who then had a shop at the top of Theobald's Road, Bloomsbury, and by that means I became acquainted with a Radical magnate, who was a man of considerable ability and of pleasing address, but professing very extreme opinions. We both laughed most heartily over poor Walker's strange lucubrations, and I found that Hetherington, equally with myself, mistrusted his physical capacity to endure the hardships of a prison. However, I promised to watch over his health and safety, and my interest in that strange young man, and the favourable report of my demeanour towards the 'martyrs' generally, subsequently secured for me a most flattering notice in the *Guardian*, and I was regarded as a model gaoler.

Those men, in point of fact, were quite tractable, and gave me but little trouble ; and, moreover, I took good care to avoid the unwise

course of irritating a numerous political party, who could, if necessity required it, command many advocates and defenders, both in the press, and in the House of Commons.

This society had extensive ramifications, and they met in mimic parliament in the public rooms in Theobald's Road, where also they had organised a sort of Committee of Public Safety, which the imprisoned vendors termed 'Our Council.' At length, a public demonstration was resolved upon, and a procession of 'trades'-unions' arranged for a given day. Those unions, in point of fact, embraced all the political agitators in or near the metropolis, who were encouraged by similar bodies in populous manufacturing towns, and the most sinister forebodings disturbed the public mind as to their intentions. It was generally credited that a design existed to attack two of the metropolitan prisons, and also that of Horsemonger Lane in Southwark.

It was affirmed that Cold Bath Fields would be assailed, in order to release from bondage the vendors of unstamped publications; that the New Prison at Clerkenwell

was also doomed to attack, with the view to enlarge one or two leading radicals, who were imprisoned there under various process ; and that Horsemonger Lane Gaol was in danger, because of the incarceration of an agitator known by the designation of ‘ Christian Evidence Taylor,’ who, in the studied garb of a clergyman, publicly lectured at the Rotunda, in the Blackfriars Road, in behalf of infidelity ; and was the author of a blasphemous work, called “ The Devil’s Pulpit.”

The visiting justices of Cold Bath Fields, who also then combined the supervision of the New Prison, determined to defend their respective charges ; and Captain Acklom, R.N., with Mr. Halswell, were deputed to wait upon the Secretary of State (the late Lord Melbourne), accompanied by myself ; and a conference with the Under-Secretary determined the course of proceeding.

It unfortunately chanced that at that identical epoch a large portion of our western boundary wall had been demolished, in consequence of its dilapidated state, and the strong hoarding, erected temporarily in its place, was deemed, under such circumstances, to be



insecure. A prompt arrangement was, therefore, made with Messrs. Sowter, builders, to put a large force of workmen on the reconstruction; and under that arrangement, throughout successive nights, and by torch-light, were hosts of artizans and labourers industriously employed to restore our natural defence.

Through the Home Office, the Board of Ordnance had also been moved to supply us with arms and ammunition, in addition to those in our possession; and, in the dusk of evening, we received from the Tower 25 carbines, 2000 rounds of ball-cartridges, and 500 hand-grenades, with a proportion of slow-match. An artillery-waggon conveyed the supply, and, according to custom, it was escorted by a corporal's guard of the Royal Artillery. The excitement created in the neighbourhood by that arrival was beyond all belief, and the most exaggerated rumours circulated as to the preparations in progress, and the force marched in 'to garrison' the prison.

'Our Council,' in Theobald's Road, was proportionately excited, and their organ, the

unstamped press, proclaimed the terror their doings had awakened, and the vast arrangements made to repel aggression. 'Two thousand men' were said to be in possession of the prison, and, at a late hour of the night preceding the intended demonstration, one of my *ci-devant* anti-stamp inmates, named Hancock (a wild and whimsical specimen of a deliberative councilman), wrote to appease my conjectured apprehensions, 'as a friend and well-wisher,' to assure me that 'Our Council' (in permanent session, by the way) had no hostile intention whatever against the prison. It was more than surmised that the reputed 'two thousand men' tended greatly to influence that peaceful resolution.

In the meantime the active mind of Captain Acklom had been exercised in providing for every emergency. The basement of my residence, open to the street, was fortified; scaling ladders (some of them, at my retirement, still existing in the prison) were manufactured, ropes were provided against various contingencies, and it was determined that, without breathing a whisper to the inmates, every

prisoner should be safely locked within his proper ward on the momentous day. An officer of the Quarter-Master-General's department, Colonel Brotherton, had been commissioned, from the Horse Guards, to meet and advise the visiting magistrates, as to their most effectual mode of defence. Whoever will take the trouble to survey the front of the prison, will notice a descending curvature in the wall, running from the roof of the governor's house to the perpendicular supporter. It assumed its present form by cutting away its superior portion on the recommendation of Colonel Brotherton, in order, from that elevated post, to ensure the command of the entrance gate. That gallant officer affirmed, that thus, from that roof, the gate might be defended, by musketry and hand-grenades, against any force that might be brought to assail it. Moreover, his counsel was that we should not attempt to contest the possession of our open ground, but confine ourselves to the defence of our building exclusively.

The staff of the Middlesex militia, under a captain, took charge of the New Prison; and,

thus prepared, Middlesex awaited the possible dispositions of the Trades' Union against her strongholds.

The day arrived—the warders were told off to specific posts—hand-grenades were planted to defend selected sites—slow-match was kept burning throughout the day and night—and small arms were duly distributed. A horse was kept saddled at a neighbouring stable, ready to convey whomsoever the scaling-ladder might enable to descend unobserved, and rush to the Horse Guards; and there, by preconcert, a force was ready to be despatched to our aid. The visiting justices, to a man, came to the prison, to stand by their main charge, while Captain Acklom rode on horseback through the streets threaded by the procession, where he watched their manœuvres and essayed to count their numbers. They were said to amount to many thousands, and walked with linked arms, five abreast. The gallant Captain rather too confidently declared, in naval parlance, he would have routed the entire array with a company of marines.

The whole affair, after all the vapouring

and bluster, terminated inoffensively ; and the visiting justices, the governor, and the prison officers failed to gather any of the laurels which the successful defence of their fortress might have ensured to them. A judicious alteration in the act regarding newspaper stamps deprived me of all my ‘martyrs,’ and I have not the slightest notion how those men thereafter developed their political tendencies, but I surmise they swelled the cry for the ‘People’s Charter.’

From causes which it is by no means easy to fathom, notwithstanding the daily increasing stringency of prison regulations, the number of inmates steadily augmented until in the year 1832 the commitments exceeded all other periods within my government, and amounted to 12,543 ; while no less than 1325 inmates occupied the prison on one day. In the midst of embarrassments thus caused by want of space and over-crowding, that terrible scourge the cholera visited the prison, and gained so fearful an ascendancy that as many as 200 prisoners were more or less suffering under its influence at one time. The deaths were

numerous, and as the non-medical attendants were compelled to set an example to the unstricken prisoners, and the superiors, in particular, deemed it an indispensable duty to encourage and sustain the subordinates ; I and others had the opportunity of marking the ravages of that disease from the incipient stages, to its most aggravated form. I, and indeed all the functionaries, went freely into the sick wards, boldly approached and without hesitation touched the sufferers, and but few of the staff contracted the disorder, although its contagious character, under certain predisposing circumstances, was unquestionably established.

So much, however, has been written concerning this afflicting malady, that it would be a work of supererogation to enlarge upon it. I shall only, therefore, note some prominent incidents applicable to the immediate history of this identical prison.

Dr. Stevens, the first propounder of the 'saline treatment' in Asiatic cholera, offered his services gratuitously to the magistrates, of which they gladly availed themselves. A love of medical science, and a disinterested sense of

public duty stimulated the doctor to undertake this voluntary task, and these magnanimous motives equally influenced one of his *élèves*, Mr. Crook, to offer to reside within the walls, and to render gratuitous assistance in the cholera wards, so long as the epidemic might continue to prevail. Those services were also accepted, and nothing more self-denying, indefatigable, and devoted, was ever contemplated than the conduct that gentleman exhibited during many weeks of arduous toil.

I believe that few observant persons can fail to have discerned the envious and detrac-tive qualities of competing men of various professions, whom a sentiment of petty rivalry has once roused into contention. In the medical board of that day, such ungenerous antagonism became most conspicuous. That board had been lamentably unsuccessful in its prescriptions for the cure of cholera, notwithstanding Sir David Barry, its chief, had enjoyed the advantage to have previously observed the treatment of that malady in Russia. In the moment of general consternation, accompanied by the ill-success of a board embo-

died specially for the occasion, the rumour spread of the benefits resulting from Dr. Stevens' treatment, to which some medical men of eminence had become converts.

A furious paper war forthwith arose, and the medical board hastened to take part in the controversy. The medical journals of the day were the chief expositors of the conflicting opinions, and during this contest Sir David Barry and the board, by appointment, visited the prison. Dr. Stevens, Mr. Wakefield the prison surgeon, Mr. Crook, and myself, accompanied the members of the board through the sick-wards, and many were the discussions that diversified the official inspection.

While Dr. Stevens dilated upon the collapsed condition to which some of the convalescents had been reduced, Dr. Barry and his coadjutors could perceive no trace of even by-gone cholera in any of those patients, and, at length, after a protracted visit, an examination of the journals, interrogation of the sufferers themselves, their nurses, and attendants (every evidence tending to confirm the testimony of Dr. Stevens), these very candid enquirers



left the prison declaring that they had failed to discover one single case of cholera within its walls

During all this time, I had remained simply a listener, leaving to the medical practitioners the exposition of a subject specifically their own, but when I, at last, heard so remarkable a declaration, I raised my hands with emotion, and testified my utter astonishment at the temerity of that scandalous assertion.

The numerous deaths I had personally witnessed, the terrible agonies of the dying, the remarkably distinctive traits of Asiatic cholera, so signally unmistakeable, and the terror with which I had contemplated hundreds of simultaneous incipient attacks, were all too fresh in my memory to allow my mind to tolerate that official hardihood, and I subsequently addressed a long letter to the Medical Times (which was duly published), in which I set forth all the facts of which I had become cognizant.

However, the members of the medical board took their departure, and in the evening of that very day, the acceleration of fresh cases,

the rapid extension of collapse to others, the groans, and feeble cries for "water, water, water," of the stricken patients, so oppressed our minds and overwhelmed us with affliction, that we regarded our position with a feeling analogous to despair. In this extremity I be-thought me of the parting assertion of the medical board, and knowing what mean, pitiful, prepossessions influenced that unprincipled avowal, a flush of indignation thrilled through my heart, and I then affirmed, as I do now, that nothing ever exceeded it in spiteful professional jealousy, and selfish unworthiness.

I feel no desire to elevate myself into a judge of appropriate medical treatment in this terrific malady, or to dogmatize upon specifics, I have only to treat of facts. In the earlier outbreak of cholera, the saline treatment proved most efficacious. Not only were pre-monitory symptoms dissipated by it, but it became effectual in most cases of extreme collapse. So signal was its success, that in my efforts to diminish the well grounded alarm of the prisoners, I told them, from the honest con-

viction I entertained, that we had found the desired remedy.

There was however, at that period, this remarkable uncertainty in the tendency of the disease, that while at one time (under some undefinable phase of atmosphere) it would yield instantaneously to the saline treatment, at other times it appeared to resist every species of remedy, and nothing could arrest its fatal progress. When that was the case, and the usual applications proved inefficacious, recourse was had to the transfusion into the veins of tepid saline fluid. In general, the extremest cases of collapse would be found to revive under these arterial injections, and for days would good hopes of restoration prevail. In every case, however, of such temporary revival, without I believe one single exception, fever supervened and carried off the patient. One fact however we established beyond all cavil, viz., that in every stage of the disorder, the indulgence in any kind of solid food was a fatal resort, and that long after convalescence slops constituted the only safe nourishment.

The course of our experience, at such a

crisis, disclosed to us illustrations of individual character in prisoners deserving of record. A young man, imprisoned under the name of Smith, for the unlawful possession of house-breaking implements, had been reduced to a state of irremediable collapse, and was fast sinking, when transfusion was determined upon. This young fellow had already undergone a modified sentence of seven years' transportation, and, notwithstanding, again took up the practice of a burglar. His energies had become so subdued by the disease, that even transfusion appeared to hold out little hope of resuscitation. The action of the injected fluid, however, imparted instantaneous temporary vigour, and, like the sudden flare of an expiring candle, the whole frame seemed to start into fitful agitation. The voice became clear and audible, though the mind still wandered. At this moment we had to mark a shocking, but impressive exemplification of 'the ruling passion strong in death;' for while all present consciousness seemed to forsake this prostrate man, the flickering energies of the soul rushed with morbid excitement into a

train of details incidental to a burglary. The contortions of the body were accompanied by such hurried ejaculations as evidenced an absorbing interest in the imaginary task. Associates were named, and terms applicable to the police, the dark-lantern, and the crow-bar, were energetically enunciated; and in such nefarious dreaminess this guilty man gradually passed into eternity. His physical exhaustion had been previously too great for even the electric influence of this transfusion to recall aught but a very transient vitality; and, within an hour of the experiment, the patient was a corpse.

In another instance, a man of stalwart frame, and resolute countenance (whom I shall designate by the initial M.), under a long sentence of imprisonment for robbery, was attacked by cholera in its most malignant form, and he lay frightfully collapsed throughout the day. Towards evening, Dr. Stevens decided upon transfusion, and the necessary preparations were accordingly made; but, so completely shrivelled and flaccid had all the veins become, that the introduction of the

point of the tube became impracticable. After numerous unsuccessful attempts, the process was abandoned, and the doctor pronounced the opinion "that he must be left to die."

In connection with pathological study, no case could have been presented in a more instructive form, so unearthly was the transformation which that stern face and manly frame had undergone. In such condition, we left the man. The following morning, all those outward ravages had disappeared, and we beheld the sufferer calmly reposing, and his countenance wearing its ordinary traits—not, however, without some placid touches, the softening results of pain, and of reflection. Nature had triumphed; he survived the shock of that fell disorder, and, in due time, he recovered.

The man's resurrection was regarded as miraculous, and he became the subject of the deepest interest. Liberal subscriptions poured in for his future benefit; the visiting magistrates voted a sum to swell that fund; the holiest counsel was poured into his ear; and promises of amended life abundantly extracted

from him ; until, at length, the day of his liberation arrived, and he went forth from prison well provided with means to battle with the world. Within one week of his enlargement, I again found him in Newgate, on a fresh charge of burglary, exhibiting his original formidable strength, wearing that decisive look indicative of stern and remorseless character, and appearing to have quite forgotten his narrow escape from the jaws of death. Alas ! such moral shipwrecks were by no means rare.

All the attendants selected from amongst the prisoners were volunteers. It was deemed not only unadvisable, but even unjustifiable to exercise any kind of compulsion in assigning men to posts so beset with peril. However, we experienced no difficulty in securing the most ample spontaneous assistance, both from officers and prisoners ; and, as it was deemed indispensable to give such persons a very generous diet, the courage of those volunteers was, in that respect, amply rewarded. But few of those who tendered willing aid became infected ; for the moment any indisposition

displayed itself, the individual so affected was promptly removed from the scene of contagion.

In some instances we could not fail to remark an heroic devotion, and an excess of tenderness and humanity, *primâ facie* alien from the mass, open to our selection. One young man, named Jones, had been detected, at dead of night, in the perpetration of a burglary at Hornsey, and, being disturbed by a policeman, maintained so long and ruthless a fight with him, until at length overpowered, that, on conviction, the presiding judge had sentenced him (in accordance with a short-lived practice of that day) to undergo two years' imprisonment with hard labour, and at the expiration of that term, to be transported for life.

The whole circumstances of such a crime would seem to indicate a reckless and cruel nature, and to belie the remotest expectation of discovering in one equal to its commission latent traits of human kindliness. This man, however, both in the progress of his sentence, and as a nurse in the cholera infirmary, proved



the most gentle and benign of human beings. He gave endless proofs of meekness, indefatigability, and sympathy for his suffering fellow-creatures; and so completely did he extort the admiration and regard of all who witnessed such unlooked-for qualities in such an apparently polluted mind, that a universal desire prevailed to obtain a mitigation of his severe sentence. The intervention of the magistrates procured for him the reversal of the former portion of the judgment; and thus about fifteen months of penal endurance in a House of Correction were dispensed with. The poor fellow took a most affectionate leave of me, and others (I may truly say) his admiring supervisors. His face, on that occasion, was pale with agitation, tears of gratitude suffused his eyes, and his voice was tremulous with emotion—and thus we bade adieu to a ‘burglar and a felon.’

In the opportunities which I necessarily so largely enjoyed of contemplating diversities of character, I could not fail to discover such varying traits and dispositions, that I have felt it somewhat difficult to maintain con-

sistency in their development. I sometimes appear to myself to be constrained to launch into opposite extremes; and, in good truth, the just discrimination in such a mass of conflicting materials constitutes a real difficulty. There were, doubtless, shades of distinction, and many intermediate characteristics; but there were also extremes of infamous, and of ennobling qualities. If, therefore, I sometimes appear to condemn immoderately, or at other times to eulogise inordinately, I can only justify myself by pleading the alternate disgust and veneration engendered by the salient contrast between attributes most detestable or supremely admirable.

We had, at this epoch, unhappily, a shocking contrast with the benignant exertions of poor Jones, whose good services I have recorded above. A young man, of good abilities and address, who had been second mate of a merchant vessel, was imprisoned for a fraudulent misdemeanour, and he also had become one of our volunteer nurses. The duties to be daily performed in the attendance on the sick were often of so harassing a nature, that

all the free agents became exhausted by fatigue ; and, in that event, prisoners, acting as nurses, were entrusted to watch through the night, while the officers snatched a few hours of rest. On those occasions, the inhuman scoundrel, of whom I am now speaking, would mock the agonies of the dying, and in various revolting ways displayed such refined cruelty, that at length every tongue was employed to assail him ; and there transpired a series of inhumanities on the part of this heartless being, that caused a universal sentiment of horror. He was, consequently, not only deposed from a post which he had so abused, but was charged before the visiting justices with numerous shameful delinquencies, and the evidence against him disclosed such extreme baseness and cruelty, that he was adjudged to receive three dozen stripes with the cat-o'-nine-tails.

That punishment was duly inflicted, and however averse the British public may be to the application of corporeal chastisement, I believe there would be found few persons, who, if made acquainted with the scarcely

credible atrocities of which that miscreant was guilty, would not be led to applaud, as too well merited, such a retribution.

All the nurses and attendants, who had rendered useful services, received, at the intercession of the magistrates, the mercy of the Crown, in the remission of the remaining portions of their sentences; and, moreover, all were awarded pecuniary recompense.

As Dr. Stevens repudiated all idea of compensation, the magistrates, in sessions, testified their sense of his disinterested services by voting him a piece of plate, value 100 guineas. To Mr. Wakefield, the prison surgeon, they also gave the same mark of approval to the extent of plate value 50 guineas; and to Mr. Crook, who during nearly three months had resided and been entertained in my house (in default of any other suitable accommodation), they presented plate, value 25 guineas.

I trust I shall not incur undue censure, if I aver, that it did appear a hardship that I and others, who shared in all the intense anxiety and imminent danger of the crisis, should have had no participation in the reward. As,

notwithstanding the comparative success of the treatment, the deaths from cholera exceeded forty, it must be manifest that we had had ample excuse for alarm.

The unlooked-for increase of numbers had necessitated a corresponding extension of the buildings, and soon after the completion of a 'vagrants ward,' calculated to accommodate 150, there was added a 'females ward,' designed to contain 300. These buildings were erected on a radiating system, but they were designed ere the new lights on prison structure, derived from the United States of America, had penetrated into this kingdom. Consequently, our new buildings were very defective, and much expense was subsequently incurred to amend and enlarge them.

A considerable outlay had been devoted to the erection of treadwheels for those female prisoners who had received the sentence of hard labour. Remonstrances were made in many quarters against such an employment for females, but they were made unsuccessfully, since it was difficult to suggest any other occupation tending to realize that sentence.

Women therefore continued for many years to perform that unfeminine labour, until, at length, the indefatigable efforts of Mr. Walesby, a barrister and a magistrate of Middlesex, were, at length, crowned with success; and he saw his perseverance rewarded by a decree of the court, which prohibited, thenceforth, an employment so unsuitable to female habits.

During the controversy which this subject engendered, and into which the press partially entered, the practice was stigmatised as not only indelicate, but even cruel. No one knew better than I did, that whatever might be charged against the system, it involved no cruelty whatever; and yet, I rejoiced greatly at its discontinuance. I was aware that at no period had we ever thus worked the women to the injurious extent previously noticed in relation to the men; that it was absurd to argue that a harmless mechanical occupation could degrade nine-tenths of such women as we beheld consigned to it; and that so far from proving practically cruel, it enjoyed amongst a certain class of females a distinctive preference.

Still, all visitors—and especially ladies, and foreigners of eminence, so universally condemned an employment which conflicted with general notions of propriety, that I was engaged in endless apologies to justify the practice; yet never could succeed in reconciling my auditors to it. Its abolition, therefore, actually relieved me from a laborious task, much harder than that inflicted upon the criminals for whom all that sympathy had been excited.

While I did full justice to the benignant intentions of public visitors, and individual declaimers, who sought to protect the weak and defenceless from oppressive treatment; I could not forbear to smile, when I read and heard fierce denunciations against the inhumanity of subjecting females to the implied torture of the treadwheel. I had in the following manner been made accidentally acquainted with the actual popularity which that species of labour enjoyed. It was our inviolable custom to extend every practicable alleviation to prisoners, whether in the extreme heat of summer, or in the intense cold of

winter ; and once during the latter season, when snow and ice abounded, I entered the treadwheel-yard, and seeing the women on the wheel (who worked, and sat at rest in equal numbers, alternately) I called out that I deplored their exposure to the cold in such weather, and authorized them to descend and employ themselves in the work room. Those on the wheel appeared to descend reluctantly, while a voice exclaimed—"Pray, sir, don't take us off the wheel!" and shortly another, and another joined in the entreaty. Somewhat astonished, I directed that those who preferred the treadwheel should remain up, and those who inclined to the work-room should come down ; and, to my surprise, notwithstanding the inevitable exposure to the weather which the treadwheel involved, twenty-four out of twenty-six gave it the preference, and two only descended. Thereupon, my further enquiries confirmed the fact, that, at all seasons, the general mass of females, frequenters of the prison, courted that labour in preference to every other.

Few people are, I imagine, aware of the



origin of the treadwheel. It was the invention of Mr. Cubitt, the engineer of Lowestoft in Suffolk, a gentleman of science, of extensive professional connections, and of gentle and pleasing deportment. The notion of such a piece of machinery owed its conception in his mind to a singular casualty. I received the following narration from his own lips.

All who may be acquainted with the county gaol of Suffolk at Bury St. Edmonds, or rather such as it was twenty years and upwards ago, must be aware of the unsightly feature then existing (after passing through the main entrance), of mere open iron fences separating yards occupied by prisoners from the passage trodden by incoming visitors. The inmates, in repulsive groups, were seen lounging idly about, and the whole aspect indicated a demoralizing waste of strength and time.

Under such dispositions, and some years before Mr. Cubitt's relation to me, that gentleman was in professional communication with the magistrates at the gaol of Bury, and there he and a magistrate, the one going out and the other entering, met in the described passage,

from which, as they stood to converse, the prisoners, as usual, were seen idly loitering about.

“I wish to God, Mr. Cubitt,” said the justice, “you could suggest to us some mode of employing those fellows! Could nothing like a wheel become available?” An instantaneous idea flashed through the mind of Mr. Cubitt, who whispered to himself, “the wheel elongated!” and merely saying to his interrogator—“Something has struck me which may prove worthy of further consideration, and perhaps you may hear from me upon the subject,” he took his leave.

After-reflection enabled Mr. Cubitt to fashion all the mechanical requirements into a practical form; and by such a casual incident did the treadwheel start into existence, and soon came into general adoption in the prisons of the country as the type of hard labour.

## CHAPTER XIII.

ESTIMATE OF THE HOPEFUL AND HOPELESS—TICKET  
OF LEAVE MEN—JUVENILE REFORMATORIES—MET-  
TRAY, ETC.

NOTHING would prove more disheartening to the country at large than the suspicion that all the sums lavished, and all the care bestowed upon convicts were perfectly nugatory, and unproductive of moral benefit. I have adduced instances of the worthlessness and incorrigibility of some prisoners, and shall yet have to adduce many more; but still, I am far from taking the most discouraging view of any who do not form part of the criminal classes, in the most unqualified sense of the

term. I have, I grieve to say, been *forced* into the conviction that there is but little hopeful expectation of the rescue of habitual thieves, and systematic evil doers. My twenty-five years' of observation have not encouraged me to rely with assurance upon their corrigibility. The case, however, is far different with first, or casual offenders.

The re-commitments will tend greatly to guide our judgment as to the relative numbers of the hopeful or hopeless—distinctions which seemed greatly to trouble some members of the committee of the House of Commons, in the session of 1850. Thirty-three per cent. of re-commitments to Cold Bath Fields, was the steady ratio for years, and, consequently, with a slight fraction above it, to account for depredators who wander into the provinces, nearly two-thirds of our prison population might be deemed reclaimable.

I believe a majority of hopeful subjects to predominate amongst the males, rather than amongst the females—so very many of the latter, under whatever form of conviction, belong to the loose order. It was always a

sight fraught with melancholy to the beholder to witness, with every recurring session, the desponding timidity, and even visible terror, with which some few trembling girls, or hitherto respectable women, would enter our walls. Their neat dress, modest demeanour, and tearful eyes, would tell the tale of their weak subjection to the temptation of theft, the consequent loss of place and character, and their enrolment amongst the convict class.

In the protection thrown around these unhappy objects, the barriers against unlimited association and corrupting influences, and in the efforts of our excellent chaplains, to ensure the reconciliation of parents, relatives, or employers, we beheld the blessed advantages of defensive discipline, and the inestimable value of pastoral intermediation. All these persons inspired hopeful anticipations, the real difficulty being, undoubtedly, the renewal of trust in them, when, on their enlargement, they should most need it, after so fearful a lapse.

Here the visiting ladies found a field for the ample exercise of their spontaneous cha-

rity. They met in committee in White Hart-court, Lombard-street, and each charged with some distinct division of the prison, at length, with Christian benevolence, all brought their united efforts to bear upon the general purport of encouragement, succour, and patronage. Many an erring sister has had cause to bless those pious efforts; although there arose occasionally grave discouragements to disappoint presumptive hopes.

Institutions and reformatories abounded; alas! for their general prosperity, they were too numerous, since most asylums experienced a struggle to secure adequate funds. Manor Hall at Little Chelsea, visited and patronised by the active zeal of Miss Neave, offered a safe asylum to the comparatively uncorrupt; and, providentially, there were not wanting considerate families who would consent to receive into their service a contrite girl, and afford another chance to the fallen.

Many of the hopeful females would be furnished with abundant clothing at the period of their discharge, be joyfully met, and gladly escorted home by attached relations, and their

separation from their late sister convicts thus become final and effectual. Of all such erring females every confident hope might be predicted that sad experience would not thenceforth be lost upon them.

Some, whose feelings were more than ordinarily acute, would exhibit the most penitential ebullitions of grief, and often be seen to indulge in copious tears. One poor woman, about thirty years of age, had been convicted of concealing the birth of her child. The circumstances left little doubt that she had destroyed it, and two years' of imprisonment were passed by her under the predominance of poignant anguish. If ever a sorrower could have been said to shed 'tears of blood,' it was that repentant woman. She was taken, on her discharge, into the service of a most estimable lady, who had acquired the knowledge of her horror of the crime she had committed, and, at the end of eighteen months, when I last heard of her, she retained the situation of cook in that family, and was still, as a servant, daily advancing in favour.

I cannot forget the visit to the prison of an

eminent tragedian, or the sympathy which he was impelled to feel for a young and comely woman, aged 21 years, whose face unmistakeably revealed the dejection that was consuming her heart. That young person underwent two years' imprisonment for an offence similar to the preceding ; and I do not think that, throughout that time, I ever saw a smile upon her countenance. Those, on the other hand, whose faults, grave enough to sully their characters, were yet more venial, soon shook off their earlier grief, and pursued the most ungenial tasks with cheerful alacrity. Such novices in crime were periodically visited by anxious friends, and the major part found welcome homes and willing services to encircle them when free.

With respect to the less hopeful portion sentenced to extended terms, I could relate many touching anecdotes. With these, the longest sentences proved the most beneficial ; and I have seen countenances, moulded into ferocity by habitual guilt and violence, become gradually refined under the influence of discipline and instruction, until bygone sinister



traces would disappear, and a mild and benignant aspect usurp their place. They would settle down into a steady adherence to the rules, become expert and industrious work-women, and exhibit a thousand good qualities; but then, alas! as the hour for their release approached, they testified to the resistless excitement of their former courses, and discarded the forced sobriety of their late existence. We generally saw them back, sometimes again under protracted sentences, but more assuredly under summary conviction. The chaplains were indefatigable in their counsel and recommendations, and the lady-visitors lavish of their countenance; but too much uncertainty veils the future of those frail beings to induce me to confide in the permanence of their good impressions. The course of life is too perilous and demoralizing to justify confidence.

Many instances of sincere contrition are, doubtless, to be cited; and one of a very remarkable nature confronted us in our own immediate neighbourhood.

Georgina Harrison, aged about 20 years,

had over and over again been committed as a disorderly street-walker, and being a riotous and fistic termagant, she proved one of our mortal pests. We suddenly lost sight of her, but, after a time, learned that, having been attacked by paralysis, she had taken refuge in the workhouse.

Under such a visitation, reflection had been awakened, and when strong enough to quit the workhouse, she took a small room, not far from the prison, and, supported by a stick, she waited at the gate, accosted the female warders as they passed out, and implored them to aid her to procure some needlework. They were all struck by her now altered deportment and manifest sincerity, and a universal desire to assist her ensued. My aid was invoked, and, by a sort of general emulation, G. H. was enabled to gain a livelihood, and every succeeding day confirmed more and more the beneficial change wrought in her; nor did I ever hear, or have reason to suspect, that she relapsed into crime. She regularly attended church morning and evening, on Sundays, and so won the regard of one of my

most respected warders (whose son and daughter were in the establishment), that she watched her with interest, and proved quite a protectress to her.

Unhappily, our experience had revealed to us that as these poor outcast creatures descend in the scale of humanity, a kind of torpid indifference seems to impel them still further downwards, until the severest physical afflictions are unequal to kindle either apprehension or penitence in their souls.<sup>1</sup>

The instance of Georgina Harrison, therefore, shows that, as the most depraved may be redeemed, there exists some small encouragement to toil, notwithstanding the general fruitlessness of the soil.

Mindless amiability and superficial good

<sup>1</sup> Many such examples are present to my memory, but the cases of Harvey and Jones, both of whom had been committed upwards of one hundred times, are quite applicable. The latter in her last moments asked me what harm she had done. One of the discouraging practices of this wretched class was to profess penitence, and seek an asylum when the winter oppressed them with suffering, only to emerge and roam at large when summer returned to render their life endurable.

qualities, in by far the majority of the least hopeful male convicts, have often led me to the conclusion that, considering their parentage, the dens they have inhabited, and the corruption they have imbibed from their infancy, they are not quite so bad—nay, they are far better than such foul nurture and tuition might lead us to expect. Nor have there been wanting some instances of resolution to amend their course of life even from these polluted ranks. Young men, such as these, have been found voluntarily to encounter the required test of living for fourteen days on bread and water only, and have thus passed their noviciate at the School of Probation in Westminster, confronted the entire ordeal, and at length emigrated to Canada.

The prison chaplains have, from time to time, received interesting letters from such emigrants, who, in some few instances, have transmitted money to England, to enable relatives to join them, and share in their prosperity. Well, these constitute a few encouraging facts ; but, alas ! they are so rare as to prove infinitesimal fractions in the aggre-

gate of crime ; and I cannot, notwithstanding their existence, relax my conviction of the all but universal hopelessness of habitual thieves. I have revelled in superabounding professions, and have not, at the moment, questioned the sincerity of those who made them ; but endless falsifications of earnest vows have coerced me into the adoption, as regards that class, of the scriptural interrogatory, “ can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? ”

Here, then, I see the danger of the ‘ ticket-of-leave ’ system, applied to old offenders from the metropolis, or from the crowded manufacturing towns. I cannot repose the slightest trust in the corrigibility of such subjects. There is no doubt of the humane intention of the system, and it is possible that it may prove successful when extended to the agricultural portion of our convicts, or to those who return to small provincial communities ; for the dens of vice, common to London and huge towns, do not exist there.

In London, I scarcely see the accessibility of employment to men returning under such

auspices. The glut in the labour-market, and the lack of character, combine to thwart even the best intentions, and the procurement of work seems more dependant upon casualty than upon just expectation.

The extruded convict returns to his home provided with money—in some cases, liberally supplied with it. Now, in whatever shape it is given, whether for work done, or as the reward of good conduct, it is, practically, the revival of the system which erst prevailed at the Millbank Penitentiary, and which was abolished (owing to the signal failure of its good effects) after the inquiry before the Lords' Committee, in 1835. Thenceforward, any pecuniary per-centage or compensation for work done was abolished by statute.

It would manifestly be a cruelty to turn a man out without any resource whatever—and it is only considerately humane to enable him to reach his own home; but to forward a practised depredator (and previous character and pursuits are largely registered) to London, Manchester, Birmingham, or Liverpool, with a liberal sum in his pocket, is the way to ensure

a waste of money on the one hand, and, in all likelihood, to plunge its recipient into his by-gone dissipation on the other. The disclosures recently made in that respect do but tend to confirm the past experience of Millbank, of which, in that day, I heard so much.

Men of tainted character should, in my judgment, undergo the *full* term of sentence awarded them; and if they are then to be turned loose upon society, the infliction must be endured, seeing that law and justice necessitate their release. I must avow that I have a great misgiving as to the future conduct of most ticket-of-leave men, wherever they may go, owing to the free communications tolerated amongst the entire convict class, as any one may perceive, who visits either the hulks or Portland Prison. I fear that years of such intercourse must convey an irradicable taint scarcely to be diffused. I, at least, regard promiscuous conversation amongst convicts as the crowning peril of transportation or penal servitude; and I never hear of such a sentence passed upon a man of previously decent association, without shuddering at the frightful

experience he is about to acquire. The whole subject, is, however, beset with difficulties, though it is still capable of disentanglement—as I hope hereafter to show.

One portion of the subject of penal administration must, however, impart hope and satisfaction to every philanthropical mind, viz., the institution of reformatory schools for younger criminals. When I had at Cold Bath Fields a class of some 120 or 130 boys under fourteen years of age, I could never regard them as in their appropriate place. Vicious as many of them were, they were yet the children of unfortunate circumstances. Some were the offspring of criminal parents, who made the ruin of their children the medium of their own gains,<sup>1</sup> but the causes involving the young of both sexes in destruction are not so well known.

<sup>1</sup> Such is the revolting wickedness of some of these reprobates, that three several instances have come to my knowledge of mothers committed as disorderly street-walkers accompanied by their own daughters. Nor, in such cases, could the most indignant reproof tend to abash them.



Poor but honest parents must reside in the vicinity of their employment, which ofttimes is in the centre of a dense population. In that case, they can only afford to occupy two small rooms. There is no yard wherein the children can play; and, as they must have air and exercise, they can only seek it in the streets, and there, in time, they become corrupted by evil companionship. There, they learn to steal, to adopt the thieves' glossary, and soon become indifferent to shame and imprisonment.

A pretty boy about ten years of age, was complained of to me for having broken the rule of silence. "Why did you speak, sir?" I inquired. His reply was "He asked me to bung him a toke." I was not then sufficiently erudite to know the meaning of such a phrase, but soon learnt that it signified "he asked me to give him a piece of bread." However, there stood that mere child already expressing the most ordinary ideas in the dialect of thieves. What a blessed opportunity to be able to consign that babe to a place where he might soon forget that vile jargon, and be carefully instructed in whatever might fit him for respectability!

I hope those reformatories will be open to children of both sexes ; since I am sure the Hon. Miss Murray does not forget her bygone visits to Cold Bath Fields, nor her experience as the patroness of the late Victoria Asylum at Chiswick. She can testify, equally with myself, how much need there is for protection to the young girl. The remarks on street association apply with peculiar force to girls of very tender years. I have had to contemplate the deep grief of honest parents, who have seen the pride of their hearts blighted through the agency of play in the public streets.

“*La colonie agricole et penitenciaire de Mettray*,” under the auspicious patronage of M. De Metz, shows what may be accomplished in such a work. It is a most interesting establishment, and its general aspect and varied arrangements excite equal pleasure and curiosity in the visitor. There was one consideration which would, perforce, obtrude itself upon my mind—viz., the superior condition of the youthful inmates over that of boys of their own degree, uncontaminated by crime. *Primâ facie* there appeared some incentive to the

commission of theft ; but I fear we can hardly organize such institutions without in some degree incurring that risk. To obviate it, the provision to levy a tax upon negligent or criminal parents must be strictly enforced. I should have no fear for such an exaction if the enforcement were in the hands of private and interested individuals, but I fear public administrators are less resolute, and more easily appeased by cunningly contrived tales of distress and inability to pay.

When I visited Mettray, in the summer of 1855, the authorities were highly elated by the recent contribution of one of their prosperous *élèves*, who had transmitted from abroad the subscription necessary to constitute him a '*Fondateur*,' or recognised supporter, and I saw his name inscribed in the list hung up in the chapel. I understand similar traits have presented themselves in the Refuge for the Destitute, in London, and they are calculated to excite the most pleasing emotions, for you there behold a gratitude, unmixed with pride, of the most exalted nature.

Mettray is in itself a sweet village, distant

about two leagues from Tours. The institution occupies a large space, and contains the residences, workshops, stables, cow-houses, and piggeries. An elegant chapel, with a loft spire, occupies a conspicuous place; and the gigantic model of a ship, in the central enclosure, presents the means for nautical instruction. Large tracts of land, adjacent to the village, are cultivated by the inmates, and farming in all its branches, upon a broad scale, tends to supply the institution, and to minister to its funds.

It is somewhat creditable to the United States, that as our prison systems have been derived from that country, so also has this reformatory system, as is avowed in the Mettray. 'Notice,' at page 3.

The open country is before the inmates, but they do not desert. The 'notice,' affirms "*point de force armée, point de murailles, point de verrous, point d'autre clef, comme on a spirituellement dit, que la clef des champs.*" We must not, however, be over-credulous, for one of the *surveillants* whispered to me, that should a boy attempt to fly, the church-bell would

sound a distinctive alarm, and the surrounding population (to whom a reward is assured), would scour the country, and arrest the fugitive. Escape is scarcely practicable, and rarely attempted.

There were 600 inmates, at the period of my visit, who were distributed into families, and a '*chef de famille*' was charged with the management of about forty. By an ingenious contrivance, they slept in hammocks on either side of the room, and the bed of the *chef de famille* was adjoining, with a power of supervision. I was particularly struck with the rare intelligence of the *surveillants*. They were of a stamp decidedly superior to warders in England, although their occupation must prove monotonous, and even wearisome.

Boys, selected for the purpose, form an effective band; the inmates are also instructed in singing; and their gymnastic feats excite universal admiration. I looked with a critical eye at the institution, but could discover no other fault than the enviable condition to which criminal children had been elevated through the medium of theft. Indeed, when Parkhurst

was first established, I and my friend Lieutenant Tracey were importuned by parents to get their sons sent there. Truth compels me to observe, that I received, at Cold Bath Fields, from time to time, several lads who had experienced three or four years training at Parkhurst, and then returned to London.

Mettray has proved, its patrons affirm, most successful; it has served as a model to the juvenile reformatory at Red Hill, under the zealous superintendence of the Rev. Sydney Turner, as it will also, doubtless, serve to guide many a forthcoming county institution.

M. De Metz has reason to be proud of his philanthropic exertions, which have invested his name, both in France and England, with well-merited honour.

Most of the hopeful class of adult male prisoners have vanished from our observation, but it is surprising how many I have known to become steady and prosperous. I occasionally meet some abroad, well attired, and having the unmistakeable stamp of respectability. On such occasions they address me with frankness, and describe their avocations. Within the

last six months, one of my quondam flock (whose circumstances were certainly not such as to menace him with want) died, and in that last sad hour, remembering the prison, and my kindly rule, he testified his respect by bequeathing me a pair of black gloves. I could not be otherwise than moved by such a memento, since I can proudly affirm I never accorded to any prisoner whomsoever an illicit indulgence.

About a year ago, I heard of one of my early prisoners, then a somewhat headstrong and intractable young man, who had sown his wild oats, and had at length acquired the rank of major. His brother recognized me, and would not permit me to pass until he had expressed his acknowledgements for bygone attentions, and communicated to me the pleasing fact of his younger brother's advancement.

But at the period of my earlier government, when the eradication of abuses had fired my zeal, I deprived a young man of the situation of 'yardsman,' which it had cost him some pounds to purchase. That young man had been in time discharged, and I had quite for-

gotten him, when one day a stranger was ushered into my office, who had desired to speak to me. His appearance was that of a man of good station, but I failed to recognize his features. After inquiring if I did not know him, and receiving a negative answer, he proceeded to inform me that he was the identical person whom I had dismissed from his post of yardsman. He intimated that his relatives, possessed of good means, had forgiven his error, received him again into their circle, and had found an eligible appointment for him. He had looked back, he said, to the vile transactions of the prison, and, although he had personally suffered by my reforms, he could not resist the inclination to call and thank me for having uprooted abuses which constituted a foul disgrace to the metropolis. There was every appearance of sincerity in his avowal, and I could not forbear to view the step he had now taken as indicative of an open and ingenuous nature, and the promise of future magnanimity.

I could even, at this moment, point to a thriving business at the West End, belonging to



a man who passed two years under my charge ; and I have reason to hope that most who have not pursued thievery as a craft, do by the aid of friends, and their own fervent resolutions, after a short struggle, either regain an honest footing in society in England, or emigrate to try their fortunes amongst strangers to whom their errors are unknown.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## CHANGE OF CHIEF WARDERS—GENTLEMEN PRISONERS.

AFTER little more than three years' service at Cold Bath Fields, Mr. Sims, the chief turnkey, succeeded in obtaining the governorship of the county gaol of Derby. He had been allured into this somewhat ambitious enterprise by an advertisement, and entered the field with numerous competitors, some of whom could boast of good position and influential connections. Circumstances of a special character combined to favour the pretensions of Sims, who appeared to be a man most opportunely at hand to suit a remarkable crisis, but for

which he might, in all probability, have sighed in vain for such promotion.

Great excitement had pervaded the working-classes of that town, who had resorted to open resistance against the local authorities, until at length public buildings were assailed, and the turbulent mob proceeded to attack the gaol. Report affirmed that the gates were in danger of being forced open, when the governor, in defence of his charge, fired his pistols, and either killed, or severely wounded, two of the aggressors. The prison was saved, but the excitement so shattered the nerves of the governor, that thenceforth he became unequal to administer his charge, and was assigned a retiring pension.

In such an emergency, the credentials of Sims were hailed as signally appropriate, and his claims seemed to attract universal countenance. *Prima facie*, the prison itself required a competent administrator, and here was a man eulogized in high terms for disciplinary qualities; and, consequently, in that respect, perhaps, the most eligible of all his competitors. But, moreover, here was also a gallant soldier,

and trained artilleryman, lauded to the echo by the most accomplished artilleryman of the day. In such a man the magistrates beheld a guarantee against the hostile attempts of infuriated bands of rioters, whose desperation would thenceforward be opposed by defensive skill and courage, calculated to over-awe any undisciplined body of marauders. Sims was, therefore, unanimously elected, and well he justified the choice of his patrons; for he fortified the entrance with light field-pieces, enfilading the approach; and, in addition, the organization of the prison within shone to so much advantage, that, in a subsequent report, the inspector of the district was induced to point it out as worthy of universal imitation.

The successor to Sims was Mr. George Hoare, whom I had found in the prison as a subordinate an appointment which he owed to the respected magistrate of the same name. Notwithstanding the similarity of name, there did not exist the remotest relationship between parties (as is often to be found) in such very different positions. Fortuitous circumstances led to Mr. Hoare's patronage of his namesake, whom

he had strongly counselled to avoid all the disreputable practices of the prison. Mr. G. Hoare had scarcely been three months on the establishment when my nomination to the post of Governor took place, and I had not the slightest cause to suspect that he had ever participated in the dishonest transactions which I have described. He was, on the contrary, endued with sound principle.

It may be well supposed that the choice of one to fill so important a post in the prison could only have originated in the intelligence and aptitude he had exhibited. More than three years' observation of the discipline in operation, and the method of promoting and sustaining it, had not been lost upon a young man of considerable natural abilities, who possessed those most invaluable qualities, indomitable perseverance, combined with unwonted firmness. The loss of Mr. Sims, consequently, was not felt; and our system, such as it then was, remained unrelaxed.

The year 1834 beheld the metropolis visited by an epidemic which proved more fatal than the cholera. The 'influenza,' of that day,

caused such extensive mortality, that vast numbers in every station succumbed to its ravages. By its agency I had to mourn the loss of the best friend and supporter I then possessed amongst the magistrates—Sir George Hampson, Bart., a man whose many rare qualities have constituted him my beau ideal of a magistrate.

Shortly before his fatal illness, he had communicated to me his intention to move the court to grant me a gratuity of £200, as a reward for my special services. As many of the police magistrates, and some few others whom they influenced, continued to resent the innovation of my appointment, and never omitted an opportunity to mark their repugnance to it, I knew that so flattering a proposition would excite vehement hostility, and, consequently, I implored of Sir George Hampson to forego his intention. His answer to me was—"Whether you approve or disapprove my proposition, I care not; such a reward is your due, and I will, if possible procure it for you."

The motion would, unquestionably, have

been affirmed, so that I had more than ordinary cause to mourn a loss, which, apart from all selfish considerations, I could not but regard as a public one—of so intellectual and independent a character was that excellent man.

The prison, equally with other parts of the metropolis, suffered extremely from that dire disorder; and the crowded infirmaries, and numerous deaths, created quite a panic amongst the prisoners. At that period, I had the mortification to have under my charge an *acquaintance*, who exhibited the least patient submission to a Providential visitation out of the vast crowd of criminals around him, and one who rebuked me with an air of insolent surliness, as though I had been the voluntary promoter of a pestilence.

It was not an uncommon thing for men of my acquaintance jocularly to implore my clemency in the event of their being forcibly compelled to become my guests; and, with the smiles which such badinage has created, I have been constrained, by experience, to admonish many, that such a contingency was not altogether impossible. In the case to which I have

above alluded, I felt more than ordinarily pained ; for I beheld a marked deterioration of character where early indication had warranted hopeful expectations, and prognostications of future misery, resulting, I had to note, from a premature addiction to gaming.

While on a visit in the county of Suffolk, A. R.—at that time an engaging youth, and general favourite—had been my fellow-guest ; and, subsequently, at an age not exceeding twenty years, he occupied a genteel situation in an office in London, and was remarkable for polished address, and gentleman-like deportment. A frequent visitor at my house, he acquired more and more the regard of all who met him ; when, in an evil hour, he was introduced by a young acquaintance into one of the ‘ hells ’ of London, and promptly became imbued with the ruinous infatuation of play.

I had been, from time to time, astonished at his prolonged absence from my house, but was quite ignorant of the fatal change in his pursuits ; when, one day, six or seven persons captured in a notorious gaming-house, entered the prison, under various sentences, and



amongst them, I was shocked to see A. R. He had incurred the penalty of six months' imprisonment with hard labour. His countenance had undergone a transformation ; the ingenuous sweetness of his address and demeanour had vanished, and there was a boldness and harshness in his traits indicative of a corrupted disposition.

He rather arrogantly claimed my interposition in his behalf, became unruly, and even insolent, and at length quitted the prison only to resume the post of *employé* in another such place of discreditable resort as the one in which he had been before surprised.

I afterwards learned that, while on a casual visit to a relative, a momentary absence enabled him to purloin and decamp with a watch ; and I last heard of him as a driver of an omnibus. Such are the ruinous consequences of an all-absorbing passion.

Not far from this period, I acquired official experience of another very singular abasement equally arising from gaming. The family of the man whose follies I am about to commemorate is of such respectability, that I

shall not hazard a disclosure by even citing the initials of the name.

Amongst the visitors at my house, at the period I am recording, was a well-known and popular vocalist, who, in the plenitude of his good nature, would give me an occasional lesson in singing. Entering my room, one day, he handed me a ballad, published in a very neat form, and said—"There is a sweet little song, composed by a friend of mine; practise it, and let me hear you sing it well, in a week's time." The ballad contained the name of the composer, and was a tasteful and expressive piece of music. Before, however, I had the opportunity to afford my instructor any rehearsal of it, the composer was consigned to my custody.

The impoverishment resulting from play had driven the young man into the usual shifts to procure money, until, at length, he had resorted to the disgraceful expedient of ordering goods from retail tradesmen, on credit, and converting such purchases into cash. For a fraudulent transaction of that nature he had been indicted at the Middlesex

sessions, and, a conviction ensuing, he received the sentence of three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

Persons of his stamp, when committed to prison, were either submissive and tractable, or irritable and turbulent. My present subject was of the latter character, and I was almost worried into extremities with him. However, about a fortnight before his discharge, he suddenly relented, expressed much contrition for his insubordination, and thanked me in earnest terms for my forbearance. In that frame of mind he regained his liberty, and displayed so altered a disposition, that his respectable brothers (one of whom was a clergyman) attributed his *reformation* to our salutary discipline, and expressed themselves to that effect to a friend of mine.

On regaining his freedom, he became sedate and studious, and by some means procured such an introduction to the bishop of a diocese (revealed to me), that his lordship consented to ordain him. While this prospect awaited my subject, the bishop received an anonymous letter, whereby he was made acquainted with

the crime his *protégé* had committed, and its consequent penalty ; and, thereupon, the bishop sent for the culprit, and, without any introductory remark, put the letter into his hand, and desired him to read it. During the perusal, the bishop fixed his eyes intently on the reader, whose countenance betrayed considerable emotion, and sufficiently revealed the truth of the allegation. However, he did not attempt to deny the charge, but at once made a frank confession of his guilt, and accompanied the avowal with such an expression of shame and contrition, that his lordship eulogized his ingenuous candour, and declared himself so satisfied with the redeeming qualities that interview had disclosed, that he resolved not to withdraw his countenance, but to fulfil the promise to ordain him.

In due time my *ci-devant* prisoner was admitted into holy orders, and his after course, in that sacred capacity, was made known to me by a gentleman, who, during his incarceration, had communicated with me on behalf of his family. It was rarely possible to meet with a young man, of twenty-four years

of age, who possessed a more handsome countenance, or who was distinguished by manners more prepossessing and refined. Well educated, and endowed with rare musical abilities, he was the most fitting man to grace a drawing-room, and to ingratiate himself with the fairer sex. He abused his position as a clergyman, and became ultimately shunned for the licentiousness that stamped his character. In time he was excluded from all society, as a dangerous libertine, and, under that ban, he emigrated. In this extremity, fortune did not forsake him, for he casually met with, and, at length, married a young widow, who had some hundreds a year. There my information concerning him halted.

I could thus lucubrate for hours upon the downward march of individuals, but I shall close this branch of my subject by recording three such examples, and amongst them the commitment of the son of one magistrate, and that of the nephew of another.

In the first of these instances, the young man had become devoted to the bottle, and, while inebriated, had been guilty of violence

for which he was adjudged to pay a fine, and was committed in default. The irregularities of this scapegrace had so displeased his family, that he found it no easy matter to procure the amount, and a few days' imprisonment was the result. The event, however, was not productive of amendment, for drink and dissipation consigned this *roué* to an early grave. The father—although aware of my necessary cognizance of his son's disgrace—was quite silent on the subject to me. He spoke as usual, when we met, upon the ordinary topics of the prison, but, so far restrained his feelings, as to observe a discreet taciturnity upon a subject which must have been distressing to him. He was a kind and good man, and, as I learned, acutely felt the errors of his son. He is now no more.

The case of the nephew of a magistrate is one presenting circumstances of a strange and painful nature, and singularly confirmative of the existence of a vice comparatively little known to society, and constituting in itself a species of moral phenomenon. We, who were so freely admitted behind the curtain of crime,

are fully aware of the revolting forms which incontinence assumes ; but, at the same time, we are soothed by the consciousness that strange, inexplicable freaks of unruly passion are, at most (in the survey of an immense population), but rare and exceptive exhibitions.

The inhabitants of a square, south of the New Road, had been scandalized by the repeated presence of an individual who deliberately insulted the ladies within the inclosure by the most shameful indecencies. For three weeks had the respectable families residing in the square been thus outraged, and at length it was deemed indispensable to take steps to abate so revolting a nuisance. A policeman in plain clothes was, consequently, set to keep watch ; and the perpetrator was detected and apprehended. He was forthwith conveyed to the station-house, and on the following day to the police-office in Hatton Garden, where he gave a feigned name. The clearest evidence having been adduced, he was convicted, and sentenced under the Vagrant Act, as ‘ a rogue and vagabond,’ to be imprisoned with hard labour for three calendar months.

Scarcely twenty-four hours had elapsed since his apprehension, before the culprit found himself within the prison walls.

He was a man apparently under thirty years of age, and his dress and appearance denoted him to be a gentleman by station. Towards evening he became violently agitated, and, constrained by dire necessity, he communicated his name and place of abode to the chief warder; and, through him, implored that I would allow his family to be apprized of his situation. I, of course, assented, and the chief warder himself was deputed by me to be the bearer of that distressing intelligence.

In the meantime, the newspapers of the day had published full particulars of the case, giving, of course, the fictitious name assumed; and the public mind was perfectly excited by the disgraceful particulars which transpired.

The prisoner proved to be a man of independent fortune, living in elegance at the West End of the town, and he had only been married to a young and accomplished woman six months ere his vile propensities led to this frightful exposure.



The chief warder found some difficulty in conveying a message which was naturally designed to be private and confidential. The footman almost refused to admit him, and pleaded the distress of his mistress at the unaccountable loss of his master. However, when the messenger intimated that he could impart tidings upon a subject which seemed so veiled in mystery, he was shown into the dining-room. In a few minutes, two gentlemen descended ; one, the elder, was the brother of the lady, the other, a most gentlemanlike youth of twenty years of age, was the brother of the prisoner. The former could hardly preserve his patience to gather the particulars, but paced the room uttering many intemperate ejaculations, and expressed his disgust by multiplied angry denunciations.

At length the two gentlemen drove to the prison, and received from my lips a confirmation of the intelligence which had so astounded them.

There was a marked, but natural dissimilarity in the deportment of the two, for while the elder paced the room in a state of feverish

perturbation, and applied every disparaging epithet to the criminal (who, by the way, was not present), the other was absorbed in grief, and, covering his face with his hands, gave vent to a flood of tears. Receiving the promise that they should see the delinquent on the following day, they tendered their thanks to me, and departed.

The interview of the morrow was simply a repetition of the display of the preceding evening. The elder visitor walked the court-yard in a state of wild excitement, refused to exchange a word with his brother-in-law, while his tongue was fruitful in anathemas. The younger, on the contrary, could not speak, owing to the excess of his emotion, but again buried his face in his hands, and wept convulsively. The criminal, in the coarse grey jacket and trowsers, and yellow waistcoat—at that period the dress of a rogue and vagabond—stood appalled by the depth of his sudden, but well-merited degradation, and seemed overwhelmed by shame and remorse. Scarcely a word could be articulated on either side, and thus terminated this singular interview.

The surgeon saw well-founded reasons to excuse the delinquent from the treadmill, so his employment became that of oakum picking. His dread of being seen and recognized by his uncle (who was a gentleman of the highest possible character, and held in universal respect) was so great, that he deemed it desirable to impart to me his relationship, and to solicit my aid to effect the concealment of so terrible a fact from him. Apart from every other consideration, my sincere respect and esteem for one who was an ornament to the bench, made me desirous to obviate a disclosure which would prove at once distressing and unavailing, and I do not believe that he has ever been made acquainted with the disgrace of his kinsman. The only magistrate to whom I divulged the truth, was the late Mr. Samuel Hoare, whose discretion and kindly disposition might be so entirely relied upon. He implored me to guard the secret from his friend, but, throughout the duration of the sentence, Mr. Hoare came regularly on each committee day, a quarter of an hour before the appointed time, purposely, but unknown

to the prisoner, to watch him for a few minutes at his degrading task.

Just before the termination of the sentence, the unhappy young wife addressed a letter to her husband, under cover to me. By law every communication was subject to my inspection, and the perusal of that letter was calculated to excite the most profound sensation. It displayed the unabated love, the boundless devotion, the noble generosity of the tenderest heart. The offence had been wisely and considerately withheld from her, and she averred that she sought not to discover it.

She feared, she said, it was "something grave and afflicting," but, whatever it might be, she freely forgave it, that she would clasp him in her arms, and enshrine him in her heart with redoubled fervour and tenacity; and declared that, if the whole earth contemned and frowned upon him, she would smile upon, and bless, and cherish him. There was not a term of generous endearment wanting, and I cannot forget, even at this distant day, the tears of feeling which were wrung from my eyes by that angelic letter.

I trust that erring man was recalled to a proper sense of dignity, not so much by exposure and suffering, as by the contemplation of the exalted qualities of one so young and injured, and yet so divinely tender and forgiving.<sup>1</sup>

I could adduce many instances tending to illustrate this deplorable vice, but shall close so ungenial a topic by shortly recording the conviction and imprisonment, for six weeks, for the same species of offence, of the Hon. Mr.——, the cousin of a noble duke. This culprit was far from youthful, and was exempt

<sup>1</sup> I earnestly hope that, in citing this case, I have said nothing that could by possibility hazard a disclosure of the parties. I believe no one connected with the county is aware of individual names in this transaction but the present chief warder of Cold Bath Fields Prison. He is too amiable and discreet, even if he should read this, to reveal them. He is doubtless even now possessed of the handsome Bible, bound in calf, which he was allowed by the committee to accept from the subject of this relation, as an acknowledgment of the tact and delicacy with which he had communicated with the family. Mr. Hoare, in the chair of the committee, begged his friends to abstain from enquiring into names.

by age from the treadmill. He, too, was attired in the costume of a 'rogue and vagabond,' his legal designation, and to him also was assigned the unpoetical task of picking oakum.

In this last case, also, was exhibited those noble traits of pity and forgiveness which suffering and despondency rarely fail to awaken in the heart of woman. The wife of this fallen man, while she rebuked his errors in befitting terms, at length conceded a free and gracious pardon. In the early part of their correspondence she displayed obduracy, and in answer to his plea of painful endurances, thus expressed herself: "I think much less of sufferings which you have so well deserved, than of the stain which your conduct has affixed upon a long line of illustrious ancestors." However, at length she relented, wrote tenderly and forgivingly, and promised to walk up and meet him at the gate on the day of his discharge, rather than attract attention by coming in the carriage.

His release became fixed in my memory by a circumstance which indicates the force of

habit. His wife had appointed an hour in the forenoon, when the throng, usually assembling to receive the liberated, would be likely to be dispersed, but she failed in punctuality. The rules of discipline had exacted from every prisoner a respectful deference towards the governor, which was chiefly manifested by an erect posture, and the salutation by the hand to the cap, and no inmate, whatever his position elsewhere, was privileged to neglect this custom.

On passing through the outer gate, some short time after the exit of my late 'honourable' captive, I saw him still standing near the entrance. On perceiving me, forgetful of his present freedom and his real position in society, he seemed solely to remember the habit of six weeks' duration, and drawing himself up, and pulling off his hat, he made me a most deferential bow. Hastily expressing good wishes for his future welfare, I passed on, and saw him no more.

In this case the real name had been given, on apprehension, but means had been found to prevent publicity, and no report of the conviction found its way into the public journals.

## CHAPTER XV.

## AN IGNOBLE SPECULATION.

As a faithful historian, I am bound to narrate the following painful occurrence. A deplorable incident had absorbed public attention, had largely invoked the strictures of the press, and aroused the sensibility of the entire kingdom. A gentleman, who had but recently got into possession of his patrimonial inheritance, had, under momentary frenzied excitement, employed the knife he was in the act of using against a fellow-student, and inflicted upon him a mortal wound. They were both at the time under the tuition of a clergyman; and, as it would appear, had been left without that



careful counsel and control which the joint pastor and tutor might have reasonably been expected to extend to them. Death having resulted from that fatal wound, trial, sentence, and committal necessarily ensued. Three years' imprisonment (unaccompanied with hard labour) was the sentence; and, on a fine spring afternoon, the delinquent stood—a trembling example of unbridled passion—within the walls of Cold Bath Fields prison.

I can never forget the pale and dejected object that justice had just consigned to my keeping. He stood within the inner portion, or, as it might appropriately be termed, the condemned portion, of the principal entrance; and in the most abject attitude, and with a countenance in which despair was deeply portrayed, he answered to my considerate intimation that the processes of conviction must indispensably be observed, “Do with me, sir, what you please.” There was something so touching in the bearing of that poor young man, and withal, a tone so piteously plaintive, in the short sentence he uttered, that few men could have contemplated the signal change

from envied position to the excess of humiliation, without the sense of oppression which sympathy with the miserable so often calls forth.

In due time—clothed in the prison garb, and assigned to a felon's ward—F. H. M. became the recognized numeral of a class. He did not, however, long remain unnoticed amongst that degenerate herd. He was quick of apprehension, but still docile and sensitive ; and very soon attracted attention by the supplicating expression of his eyes, the punctilious obedience of his conduct, and the voluntary exercise of every useful quality in aid of the establishment. Even those who had first observed him with latent misgiving, began, ere long, to whisper commendation of his gentle, unobtrusive qualities, until, at length, every tongue was employed in his praise, and he won the regard of all observers. Never, I will venture to say, were combined, under the cruel exigencies of his condition, a more impressive example of all that could raise and dignify a fallen man, coupled with the buoyant activity of an indomitable mind. Struggling

manfully against his merited abasement, he sought opportunities to exercise an unwearied industry. Not subject to hard labour, by the tenor of his sentence, he would still forward, with untiring energy, any repair or enlargement of the building. A natural mechanic, he would bend his faculties to a participation in any useful design, and exhibit the skill and tact of an artizan in many an intricate operation. I could at this moment point to several elaborate completions, the fruit of his aptitude in handicraft.

To while away the tedium of such protracted imprisonment, his prayer to the visiting justices to be allowed, at his own expense, the use of a lathe, had been humanely conceded (subject to certain conditions), and the numerous productions of his rare mechanical genius excited astonishment and admiration in all who examined them, until, at length, this ingenious occupation produced results of a very uncommon and unlooked-for character.

The commission was at that time burthened with the name of a young magistrate, whose pliant conscience led him to the practice

of numerous dissimulations. I forbear to give his name, but few magistrates will fail to recall to mind that notable delinquent. Under the pretence of being a 'lathe man,' he became a very frequent visitor to the prison, and passed the greater portion of his time there in conversation with the industrious M——. At length, all who took an interest in my youthful prisoner could not fail to perceive an increasing gloom to settle on his countenance. Cheerful submission seemed to have fled, and a marked melancholy supplied the place of the hitherto habitual serenity. An excellent deceased justice (Mr. McWilliam), who took an earnest interest in poor M., was prompt to discover this change, and, with great tact and delicacy, sought ere long to ascertain the cause. As he had, by all the arts of gentle suavity and kindness, won M.'s respect and confidence, his effort was successful, and the fact transpired that the designing 'lathe man' had proposed to secure M.'s enlargement for the consideration of £3,000. He had, from time to time, since the preliminary proposition, discussed with M. the details of the plan, and

the name of the Marquis of Normanby (then Secretary of State for the Home Department) had been employed with mendacious freedom, and a pretended relationship to the proposer set forth as a reliable ground of success.

Here it is necessary to observe that there did not exist the remotest hope of a pardon to be thus surreptitiously obtained, and there is little reason to doubt that the upshot of the scheme would have been the extraction from M. of, at least, £1000, to minister to the gaming propensities ascribed to the ignoble magistrate.

M. was, in spite of the excitable temper which had thus obscured his destiny, a man of strict probity, and who possessed a chivalrous regard for honour; and the shock to his sensitive mind at the contemplation of the baseness of his magisterial visitor, disturbed his equanimity, poisoned his peace, and wrought the morbid melancholy which has been previously noted. So soon as Mr. McWilliam had drawn from him the important secret which had cast a blight upon his spirits, his first question was—"Have you told this

matter to the governor?" "No," said M.; "I have not dared to whisper a word of it to any one, until your kind inquiries extorted the secret from me." A ready assent to enlist me into their confidence, soon brought Mr. McWilliam into my office, and a very grave conference terminated in our joint conclusion that much tact and discretion were essential, in order successfully to expose and punish so flagrant a design. The unsupported assertion of a convict (however heretofore respectable), opposed to the denial of a magistrate, could not in reason, we argued, be expected to prevail, and the means, legitimately to fortify the accusation, we proposed to consider, and, at our next meeting, to discuss. Meanwhile silence was resolved upon, until all should be prepared for a full disclosure.

The fruit of our next consultation was an instruction to M. to exact the condition that the payment of so large a sum should not be made without the cognizance of M.'s solicitor. That proposition appeared to be very distasteful to the magisterial negotiator; but, having assumed the form of an ultimatum, the

condition was reluctantly assented to, and an interview with the solicitor was appointed to take place.

The solicitor in question was a young man of no long standing in his profession, whom M. had esteemed as an intimate friend and companion, but who was singularly disqualified to act in a matter requiring firm judgment and nice discrimination. Having conferred with the magistrate, he became stricken with a mawkish sensibility, and, forgetful of his duty to his friend and client, weakly declared his unalterable determination to resist any formal disclosure of the conversation he had held with the negociator. We were all three thunderstruck at this strange and unlooked-for resolution, which positively distressed poor M. At his earnest entreaty, however, the solicitor consented to a conference with me, and I strove in vain to shake his very capricious determination, notwithstanding the strong language I employed to reprove his moral pusillanimity. His excuse was founded on ideal sentimentality.

In his interview with me, the solicitor had

not scrupled to relate the whole conversation he had held with the magistrate; and, consequently, in default of other proof, I committed to paper all that I had heard, and, moreover, took care that others should note the date and hours of the solicitor's visit to me.

Matters were now thought to be ripe for publicity, and Mr. McWilliam explained the whole nefarious transaction to his brother justices on the visiting committee. Nothing could be more prompt and decisive than the steps then resolved upon. Careful extracts were made from my journal of the magistrate's very numerous visits. M. was examined, and deposed to all that had passed in the lathe-room. I detailed the admissions of the solicitor, and at length a deputation of visiting justices waited on Lord Normanby, and his lordship was thus apprised of this unhappy delinquency, and the fictitious claim to relationship with himself; for that assumption was found to be utterly baseless.

Mr. Vizard, then solicitor to the Treasury, was instructed by the Home Office to pursue an inquiry, and in due time all the par-



ticulars were laid before the Lord Chancellor. That high functionary called upon the accused magistrate for explanations, when certain awkward admissions caused his expulsion from the bench. His name was forthwith erased from the commission.

Meanwhile, poor M. could not, by any reasoning, be aroused from his fatal lethargy. He gradually pined and sunk, until his removal to the infirmary, and close confinement to his bed ensued. No medicinal remedies seemed to avail, and the most serious apprehensions for the preservation of his life began to predominate. Dr. Roots was now called in, and all that skill on the one hand, and tender nursing on the other, could effect, were tried in vain.

Many were the reports transmitted to the Home Office ; but the unwarrantable use made of Lord Normanby's name, had rendered that minister cautious, lest undue influence should be suspected to have obtained. At length, the state of the patient became so alarming, that all hope of his life was nearly abandoned. The visiting justices now addressed his lordship in terms of respectful remonstrance, which

produced a desire to be furnished with a train of symptoms ; and Dr. Roots having defined the precise features of the case, the hoped-for pardon arrived. Even then, so perfect was the patient's prostration, that everybody (the physician included) believed that it had come too late. I took leave of my young prisoner with the firm conviction that he was merely on the road to an early interment ; and the feeble, but strenuous effort he made, at parting, to breathe his thanks to me, nearly exhausted him.

Conveyed to his own home, and there tended by his mother and sisters, his mind conceived new life. That terrible incubus, the prison, was removed ; the thrall of its gloom, and all its indispensable exactions were gone ; and the mind, relieved from a horrible burthen, sprung, as it were, from the bonds of subjection, and asserted its native elasticity. M. was restored to health, and lived to load me with grateful friendship, which I the more readily cherished, because it was gained without one single breach of duty. I retain his wedding present, an elegant silver inkstand, inscribed 'a token of gratitude and esteem.'

Alas! he is now no more. He has left a widow and several children to bewail his premature death, but he atoned amply for his early faults by the dispensation of blessings and comfort to all around him. He died deeply deplored, for he was a man of warm and affectionate heart, of a genius too rare to be often matched, and it has fallen to the lot of few men to be more wept over and regretted than was poor F. H. M.

He had long before his death been in possession of Her Majesty's free pardon, which acts as a disenthralment from all the ancient penalties appertaining to a conviction of felony. Appended to that costly parchment was a seal of solid wax, of vast weight and circumference, for the attainment of which, exorbitant fees were exacted.

It was not on the male side only that we were troubled (the term was too often appropriate) by the presence of persons of superior station. On the female side, about this period, the lady of a baronet had been consigned to my keeping for two months. The commitment of one in her position, and the grounds of her conviction

were equally extraordinary. The exposure of which she was thereafter the object might justify the publication of her name at length, but it is perhaps more considerate towards her connexions to conceal it, since years may have cast an oblivion over the disgrace they had derived from her.

The wife of Sir ~~Walter~~ B~~art.~~e, Bart., then separated from her husband, possessed, from various sources, about £800 a year, and lived near the Regent's Park. Having been extravagant, and indifferent to her credit, she was in arrear of rent, and at length suffered her furniture to be seized in execution. Exasperated against her landlady, and determining to avenge herself, she caused hand-bills to be printed and circulated, in which she charged her creditor with theft, and affected to offer a reward for her apprehension. It was also proved that Lady B. had, with her own hands, dropped these papers down neighbouring areas, and had even rung bells to ensure their delivery.

The injured party, under legal advice, indicted her at the Middlesex sessions for 'libel,' and she, making light of the process, neglected

to do, what in those days was of easy accomplishment—viz., to remove the case by *certiorari* into one of the superior courts ; but, failing to do that, she pleaded to it at the sessions. When the whole train of circumstances came to be revealed, her ladyship's dishonesty and malignity produced a storm of indignation in a crowded court, which was enhanced by the proof that she had stooped with her own hand to disseminate the unmerited slander. The jury returned a prompt verdict against her, and a full bench of magistrates resolved to teach her a useful lesson. The sentence pronounced was imprisonment in the House of Correction for two calendar months.

She proved to be, in the highest degree, pert, supercilious, and disobedient. Indignant at having to assume, equally with all others, the prison dress, she displayed her resentment up to the last moment of her incarceration. In the onset, I endeavoured by gentle reasoning to reconcile her to the maxim that the law could not recognize distinction of persons.. However, I failed to pacify her wounded pride, and merely entailed contumely on myself by the vain attempt.

She was a woman whose present disguise could not conceal her ladylike pretensions ; and although nothing can be conceived more plain and devoid of ornament than the prison cap, she wore hers in a way to mark her the indubitable gentlewoman. Not a soul who beheld her amongst her motley class, but asked, with surprise, who it could be that bore so different an appearance from the rest

The correspondence (which was not then, as thereafter, extremely limited in all cases) disclosed unerringly the kind of relation that subsisted between her and a certain major, and she was regarded, in the neighbourhood of her residence, as a person of disreputable character. There was, however, as was reported, some cogent reason why her husband could not aspire to a divorce from her, and she therefore erred with impunity.

A slight indisposition caused Lady B. to be sent for a few days to the infirmary, and there we found she vented her rage, to the edification of the few ignorant patients around her, by denunciations against the surgeon and myself ; boasting that, as soon as she should again be

e, she would not fail to have us both dismissed from our situations.

It may be imagined that I naturally hesitated to visit a woman, in her position, with a punishment which, in strictness, the law would justify. I left her to the indulgence of her harmless chagrin, simply smiling at its overt manifestation. When, however, I became aware of the gratuitous impertinence of the foregoing declaration, I deemed a little mortifying retribution to be no more than such unwise presumption deserved. Consequently, entering the infirmary, and in the presence of her recent auditors, I very quietly addressed her in these terms: "I understand, Lady B., you have had the hardihood to threaten, in the hearing of the nurse and these prisoners, to have me and others dismissed from our situations. I really wonder that you should have ventured to make so idle a threat, for you must well know that you have neither the grounds, and certainly not the influence to effect anything of the kind. Allow me to advise you, when you shall be free, to employ yourself to redeem your own character; for.

I assure you, it is so seriously damaged, that your best efforts can hardly re-establish it." Rage mantled in her countenance, and she became pale with anger ; but, appearing suddenly to recollect herself, she merely said—" Sir, you're very polite," and sat down.

A phaeton, with a servant in livery, awaited her on her discharge ; and, bestowing upon me the darkest imaginable look, she departed.

At no very distant period, Lady B—— again became disgracefully notorious. She was convicted, in one of the superior courts, of wilful and corrupt perjury ; but, sacrificing her bail, she failed to appear to receive judgment, but evaded it by going abroad.

Detection of crime and the severest visitation of justice have sometimes resulted in an extraordinary advancement of the fortunes of the delinquents. A considerable sensation had been excited in several noble families by the discovery that a favourite nurse, named Dora Fenn, was found to have been a systematic depredator. She was a stout, dark, handsome woman, apparently about 35 years of age, who had long been esteemed a valued nurse to



ladies of distinction in their confinement, or when suffering from sickness. Not only had she been largely trusted, but held in the highest favour; and happy was that lady deemed to be, who could secure the services of Dora Fenn.

A deplorable accident had prostrated the lady of a noble viscount, who was tended during her illness by the incomparable nurse. All had progressed favourably, and Fenn, no longer needed, had returned to her own home, when her ladyship's watch, and a most valuable order, set in brilliants, appertaining to his lordship, were missed. Those losses created intense consternation, for the reports of the day computed the value of the order at 600 guineas. The case was confided to the scrutiny of Mr. Goddard, of the public office, Great Marlborough Street, who subsequently became chief of a county constabulary.

He was a man of very superior address, and of marked intelligence; and in the progress of the case, nothing satisfactory having been elicited, he learned that Dora Fenn had been an inmate of his lordship's house. At the

proposition that her abode should be visited, acute distress was manifested by the family. *She* could never be suspected—she was too dear and good a creature! Goddard, however, insisted, and, armed with the necessary warrant, he repaired to her house, accompanied by his lordship, who benignantly desired to soften the seeming affront.

When Fenn appeared, many kind apologies were offered, and the sad necessity blandly explained; but no sooner had the nature of the visit transpired, than the countenance of the woman, and her insolent refusal to permit a search, convinced Goddard of the soundness of the step he had counselled. Proceeding, in spite of opposition, to execute his mission, he discovered the watch and appendages, but the order was not to be found. The apprehension of Fenn of course ensued, and, after an introductory examination, she was remanded to my custody. There, overwhelmed with despair at the exposure of her treachery, she was largely visited by members of the aristocracy, who now began to account for the mysterious disappearance of

various valuables from their own residences while the petted nurse was there.

A committal to Newgate, trial, conviction, and a sentence to *death* ensued, but still the order, so much prized, was not forthcoming. At that period, the execution of the highest penalty of the law was by no means unusual, and Dora Fenn's life was far from safe. In that emergency, the late Mr. Wontner, then governor of Newgate, exercised a tact and judgment which were crowned with success. Summoning Fenn to his office, he told her to listen to him, and profit by his advice. Her life, he assured her, was in danger, but the restoration of the missing order (which she, undoubtedly, had stolen) might save it. He furnished her with paper, pen, and ink, and said—"Write to whomsoever you please;—your letter shall not be read; but direct that the order be enclosed to me in a parcel forthwith, and we will see if we cannot preserve your life." These particulars I learned from Mr. Wontner himself, and, moreover, the following day the order was in his hands.

Dora Fenn was transported for life, and

became acquainted with, in Australia, and married, a man of enormous wealth, who, as a convict, had been assigned to that colony for life, at a time when expatriation simply constituted the punishment of transportation. The wealth of that individual, acquired by grazing and trading in wool, was recorded in that most interesting document, the Transportation Committee's Report. The late Sir William Molesworth had presided over that inquiry, and had largely been assisted by the late Sir Robert Peel and other eminent men. One of the most gifted writers of the present day, to whom I lent that report, declared to me, that no romance had ever excited in his mind a deeper interest than had been awakened by the perusal of that report. It is fraught with stirring incidents.

Here, then, we see that two convicts—the man referred to, and Dora Fenn—became enriched through the agency of crime! Rare and exceptive cases, doubtless, are these, but not the less remarkable and astounding.

## CHAPTER XVI.

GENERAL MARCH OF IMPROVEMENT IN PRISON  
ADMINISTRATION.

PUBLIC opinion now began rapidly to tend towards the exaction of some general measure, in order to enforce a better administration of the prisons of the country. There were not wanting persons who affirmed that the efforts at amelioration in Cold Bath Fields House of Correction had awakened inquiries into the subject, and stimulated an improving spirit.

Already, had a Committee of the House of Commons, of which Colonel Davies, then M.P. for Worcester, was chairman, gone partially into the question, with the view to expose and eradicate the corruption of gaols. No great

good, however, had been effected by that inquiry, because no weight whatever attached to Colonel Davies, as an authority upon such a subject. All those conversant with prisons expressed surprise at his interference, and nothing was anticipated from his labours. His pretensions to meddle with the subject at all were derided, and the information elicited by that Committee has rarely been since quoted.

The prisons of the United States began to attract much notice, and the novel mode of structure, there introduced, rapidly acquired celebrity, and was destined to eclipse the Panopticon, and crude radiating plans which had been gradually growing into favour in England. Mr. Crawford, a gentleman of great zeal and good intelligence, who, as a friend and coadjutor of Mr. Samuel Hoare, had long given gratuitous attention to the Refuge for the Destitute, and other beneficent societies—had been dispatched by the government to examine into and report upon the penal establishments of America, and his report was deemed an able and lucid *exposé* of the whole subject.

I had long known Mr. Crawford in his philanthropical character, and I am quite disposed to render full justice to the purity of his motives. He was an honest advocate of his too hastily-formed opinions, into which he appears to have rushed with headstrong impetuosity.

It is scarcely possible to conceive how a man, of Mr. Crawford's Christian principles, could have imbibed, with such implicit faith, the over-strained estimate of good then predicated of the American Penitentiary system, and have been blind to the intense cruelty of its operation. I intend, anon, to analyse the subject, and shall, I feel sure, have no difficulty in demonstrating the barbarity of its dispensation, and the exaggeration employed to herald its purifying effects. Meanwhile, I have to deal with a notable metamorphosis in the discipline at Cold Bath Fields, effected through the instrumentality of Mr. Crawford.

First, however, let me shortly glance at the singular condition of most gaols, even then ; I speak of the year 1834. There had long been a respectable effort made to promote in-

dustry and morality at the Millbank Penitentiary, which signally failed, and (apart from that and Cold Bath Fields, and the prisons of Wakefield and Petworth, which at least exhibited internal probity), I believe, the only establishment in the United Kingdom really worthy of imitation, was the Bridewell at Glasgow. In despite of defective buildings and inadequate space, the late Mr. Brebner (a man of remarkable acumen) had organized an average band of 600 or 700 delinquents (consigned for terms of trifling duration, or at most to the maximum of two years) into a tractable and most industrious community. Innumerable trades were in full activity, yielding large profits to the city, while the majority of the inmates were in separate confinement, which was the reputed system of the place. I shall have to show hereafter the strange results of that careful administration.

There may have been degrees of monstrosity, but all other prisons (and I heard of but few exceptions) were more or less reeking with moral pestilence. Newgate presented a hideous combination of all that was revolting.



Whatever may have been the good qualities of Mr. Wontner, the governor (and they were numerous), no one appeared to be more opposed than he to any change in the administration in gaols. Considering his very benignant character, I have always marvelled at so mischievous a leaning to things as they were, simply because they had so long existed. The thieves therein consequently smoked their short pipes, gamed for beer, swore and fought at night amongst each other, to the full swing of their inclinations, and the whole aspect of the place resembled a pandemonium.

Giltspur Street Compter was quite as bad in all respects, and may be fairly adjudged to have been *worse*, for it was the City 'House of Correction!' Old Mr. Teague, then governor, was a kind-hearted, worthy, but weak man, to whom the city authorities allotted the munificent stipend of £800 per annum, with residence and perquisites, for producing that immaculate specimen of 'correction.' So many years had witnessed the prevailing 'discipline,' that Mr. Teague openly justified its maintenance, and actually pined over the 'cruel'

innovations then progressing. He touchingly lectured me upon the 'inhumanity' of depriving the 'poor creatures' of beer and tobacco. 'For his part, he could not imagine how people could be so unmerciful to their fellow-creatures. \* It was perfectly shocking!' And thus expressing himself, his features wore the shadow of affliction.

If I were to dilate upon other prisons in London and its vicinity, I should only have to reiterate the condemnation of the two last. Travelling into the provinces, the prisons of Bury St. Edmunds, Salford, and Kirkdale, created in my mind irrepressible disgust. I mused upon them with wonder that such detestable haunts should be tolerated. The Glasgow Borough Gaol, in the very heart of the city, containing the almost pattern Bridewell, did not possess adequate space in one room for the objects crowded into it; and, in going through a small chamber allotted to females of all ages, I was obliged to walk with the utmost caution to avoid treading upon those seated on the ground.

It will hardly be imagined after this rela-

tion that neglect and mismanagement could any where else be found to exceed the foregoing synopsis ; but such was the fact. The gaol of the city of Edinburgh, on the Calton Hill, which could even then boast of a most ornamental exterior, was by far the worst specimen of dirt, revolting license, and audacious uproar amongst the inmates that my sight had yet encountered. Dirty ruffians crowded around me, laughed in my face, and indulged in flippancy remarks with the most insulting familiarity. I know not if his grace the Duke of Richmond has yet forgotten his visit to that seat of dire neglect ; but I full well remember his account to me of the surprise and shock with which he beheld so deplorable a scene. And yet the governor, to all appearance, was a mild and amiable man, who cautioned his grace not to go into a certain part of the prison ' lest he should be insulted.'

The very singular character of prison economy in former days and, indeed, up to this very time, cannot be more effectually illustrated than by a short review of what transpired from Ilchester Gaol. Henry Hunt, the

radical orator (who subsequently became M.P. for Preston) having been convicted of political libel, was consigned for a period to Ilchester gaol. There, he and other privileged inmates boarded with the governor in his own house, and occasionally joined that functionary at a rubber of whist. One of those casual broils, which so frequently occur at the whist-table, arose between the governor and Mr. Hunt; when the latter, forgetful of his relative position, used—in the heat of the moment—language which was deemed too contumacious to be tolerated. Outraged discipline must, therefore, needs be vindicated, and Mr. Hunt was transferred from the whist-table to the refractory cell. There, brooding over revenge, he was not long in deciding upon the appropriate mode of retaliation.

The transactions of Ilchester gaol would, it seems, by no means endure the light of investigation, and knowing that, Mr. Hunt soon made the Home Secretary acquainted with some awkward facts which caused a minute enquiry into the whole *régime*. The disclosures which ensued, wrought the governor's dismissal from his office.

I learned these strange incidents from various sources, and they were subsequently confirmed to me by Mr. Treganza (late governor of the Bedford gaol), who, at the period of those occurrences, had been chief-turnkey of Ilchester gaol. He at the same time related so many facts indicative of every species of corruption existent in that prison, that it appeared scarcely credible that one so beset with dangers should have had the temerity to allow temper to provoke the hostility of a man as implacable as Mr. Hunt was said to be.

Mr. Crawford having concluded his report upon the prisons of the United States, travelled into the north of England and to Scotland, and, during his excursion, visited certain of the prisons. He returned to London much impressed with the condition of two, viz., that of Wakefield in Yorkshire, and the Bridewell of Glasgow.

At the former, the associated silent system had been recently introduced under the auspices of a zealous magistrate, who was ably seconded by Mr. Shepherd, the governor. The

latter, I have already described. It stood a monument of individual skill and devotion to public interests, and attested the high qualities of Mr. Brebner, a man of quiet, unobtrusive manners, but endowed with rare sagacity.

The practical eye of Mr. Crawford soon discerned the value of these improvements, and he suggested to Mr. Hoare that I should be sent down, first to Wakefield, and thence to Glasgow, to witness these two systems in operation, and report upon the practicability of applying either to Cold Bath Fields. The suggestion was communicated to the visiting justices by Mr. Hoare, who strongly advised its adoption; and, consequently, in the month of December, 1834, I set off thus commissioned.

Properly accredited to the authorities of both localities, I experienced every desirable attention, and was allowed the facility to make the closest observations; and, in short, had access to whatever was calculated to instruct me in the objects of my investigation. I soon perceived that the paucity of cells at Cold

Bath Fields presented an irremediable obstacle to the adoption of the separate system, even if that mode of discipline should be preferred, but that some practical alterations would enable us to embrace the silent system.<sup>1</sup>

On my return, I presented a minute report, which was laid before the court, and subsequently published *in extenso* in some of the daily journals. At length the requisite authority was conceded, and all preliminary arrangements perfected ; and, on the 29th December, 1834, a population of 914 prisoners were suddenly apprized that all intercommunication by word, gesture, or sign, was prohibited ; and,

<sup>1</sup> Hitherto room had been found, in order to compensate for the deficiency of cells, by sleeping three convicts in each cell ; but under the newly-imported discipline this arrangement could no longer be tolerated. We adopted, therefore, the expedient of enclosing in every yard the space under each set of treadwheels, which were erected on elevated platforms. The previous day-rooms, and every spare room throughout the great building, were then adapted to sleeping by the construction of berths in three tiers, as in use in the cabins of passenger vessels ; and opposite to these the monitor slept on an iron bedstead. A mode of inspection from without was open to the night watchman.

without a murmur, or the least symptom of overt opposition, the silent system became the established rule of the prison.

In the outset, it was effected by the employment of monitors, selected by their conduct and intelligence from amongst the prisoners. That practice is now prohibited by law, and the interdiction is undoubtedly both just and politic ; still, some of the more reflective convicts, when elevated into a species of authority, displayed zeal and discretion. They perceived and appreciated the salutary objects of the regulation, and having experienced, while committed for trial, the mischiefs of vicious communications, they rejoiced to be made instruments for suppressing so great an evil.

In short, all (except the irreclaimably debased) who had watched and deplored the system, now happily superseded, saw cause to rejoice in the change. There was now a real protection to morals, and it no longer became the reproach that the comparatively innocent should be consigned to inevitable demoralization and ruin. The reflections of numerous prisoners evinced the value of the



change; and a soldier of the Blues, imprisoned by sentence of court-martial, who had been the inmate of a provincial gaol, was quite eloquent in his avowal of his gratitude, at beholding so blessed a barrier against the inroads of the frightful corruption it had been his misfortune to witness.

We were now, however, on the eve of the most important movement in relation to prison discipline which had yet been contemplated. A committee was appointed by the House of Lords to inquire into the state of gaols and houses of correction, throughout the kingdom, which carried with it the requisite moral weight, seeing that his grace the Duke of Richmond was the chairman, and he was encouraged in his patriotic task by the co-operation of many influential noblemen.

The Duke of Richmond was favourably known as a man of independent mind, who possessed a rare aptitude for business, and who was, moreover, a useful and indefatigable magistrate. The prisons of the county of Sussex, especially that of Petworth, had experienced the benefit of his intelligent care; and

he therefore advanced to the accomplishment of his present task with a *prestige* of the utmost value. His labours—unlike those of Colonel Davies—invoked the sympathy of all those whose names possessed authority on the subject, and amply did his grace justify their confidence.

The session of 1835 witnessed the successful completion of his labours, and the passing of an act of parliament replete with wholesome provisions. This statute authorized the first appointment of inspectors, who were required to visit the gaols of their districts periodically, though, of course, at certain intervals, and report to the Secretary of State their condition; and also bring to light the fulfilment or neglect of legal requirements.

Magistrates, governors, chaplains, and all other functionaries, who could throw light upon the subject, had been examined; all accessible establishments had been visited; of course, my extensive charge was not neglected. It was not only visited by a collective body of peers, in their senatorial capacity, as a committee of parliament, but the Duke of Rich-

mond repeatedly came alone ; and, upon those occasions, would see and examine individual prisoners, and copy with his own hand lengthened statements, quite regardless of trouble. I have never forgotten his laudable patience and assiduity ; and it is nothing less than simple justice to record his enlightened and zealous exertions. Although, doubtless, much remained to be effected, the Duke of Richmond certainly did more for the cause of prison improvement, and laid the foundation for more solid reformation, than any legislator whose exertions had preceded his.

In this act due provision was made to facilitate the adoption of the separate system where 'practicable, but a proviso wisely guarded against its compulsory introduction. I shall hereafter show how salutary that restriction proved to be.

When the peers visited Cold Bath Fields, they were accompanied by H.R.H. the Duke of Cumberland, who afterwards became King of Hanover. That prince had, from various causes, acquired great unpopularity in England, and I, equally with nine-tenths of the popula-

tion, had conceived a strong prejudice against him. During this visit, however, which lasted nearly three hours, his royal highness was so affable, courteous, and considerate, that I could not help believing that circumstances might have wrought some serious injustice towards him. Certain it is, my impressions regarding him have ever since undergone a change; for not only did his demeanour towards me denote the polished gentleman, but his general observations betrayed a humane interest in the condition of the prisoners, manifesting indeed the utmost commiseration for the hopeless prospects of the majority.

At that identical period, there was within those walls a somewhat remarkable man, who had been incarcerated at the instance of the Duke of Cumberland himself; and his royal highness detailed to me the full particulars of the case, which, before, I had merely gathered from the police reports.

The individual in question was known by the name of Captain Ashe. He was a man of high stature, possessed a military carriage, was well educated, and could assume the most

winning manners. He was about fifty years of age. His daughters, most elegant young women, who visited him once during his imprisonment, so sorrowfully described to me the fatal errors of his life, that there was no doubt he had forsaken the path of honour, in which he was gifted to shine, under the vain hope of advancing his interests by chicanery and inventive rascality.

He owed his imprisonment to the following circumstances. Captain Ashe had written, what purported to be, the Life of H.R.H. the Duke of Cumberland, and so soon as he had completed the MS., he opened a correspondence with the duke upon the subject. He informed H.R.H. of the contemplated publication, affected to deplore the poverty which impelled him to the task, professed to repudiate any ill will towards the duke, and concluded by offering to suppress the work altogether upon condition that H.R.H. should pay him £1,000. Moreover, he simulated great regard for candour and fidelity, and averred that the incidents had all been collated from the most authentic sources,

and such as the public would not fail to accept as trustworthy.

In such an emergency, the Duke of Cumberland displayed considerable tact and ingenuity. He became aware that he had to deal with a scoundrel and a libeller, and he proved more than a match for his wily traducer. In his reply, H.R.H. expressed his regret that a measure so hostile to his peace should be contemplated, and evinced a desire to arrest the publication of a work calculated to inflame the public mind against him. Still, he deemed it only just, before he sacrificed so large a sum as £1,000, that he should have the opportunity to peruse the MS., and thus be in a situation to judge how far he might be disposed to go to ensure its suppression.

Captain Ashe allowed himself to be caught in the trap thus set for him, and, with a simplicity scarcely to be looked for in a designing trickster, forwarded the MS. to the Duke. H.R.H. lost no time in perusing it, and found it, as he declared to me, a tissue of the most scandalous falsehoods and malignant inventions; and, under proper legal advice, he

resolved to retain the libel in his own possession.

When Captain Ashe wrote to demand the restitution of his MS., or the immediate payment of the £1,000, he was informed that the Duke would neither restore the MS. nor pay the money, and that H.R.H. referred him to an action of trover, as the sole medium through which the work would be restored. Thereupon, Captain Ashe became furious, and wrote to declare that, unless the MS. should be forthwith returned, he would waylay the Duke of Cumberland, and shoot him through the head. A warrant was instantly procured ; Captain Ashe was apprehended and conveyed to Bow Street, and after a formal recital of the preceding facts, Captain Ashe was committed to my custody, in default of finding bail to keep the peace for the period of six months.

Up to within a few days of the termination of his imprisonment, he was prodigal of smiles and complacency. It seemed scarcely possible for him adequately to display his sense of obligation for my courtesy towards him, while

he bespattered the prison and its management with superlative encomiums ; but no sooner had his prospective stay dwindled into a few short days, than his outward demeanour changed, and some artful scheme seemed to occupy his mind. The light of his countenance became obscured, and a rigid and repulsive stateliness appeared to interdict any approach to bygone civility.

I was not slow to divine that some subtle machination was in embryo, and I was led by a knowledge of the knave's antecedents to anticipate the very plot which was so soon to be revealed. Not many days had elapsed after the release of Captain Ashe, ere a messenger was the bearer of a letter to me, the purport of which was as follows :—

Captain Ashe informed me he was in immediate want of *five pounds*, which, he doubted not, I would instantly send him. He thought it right, at the same time, to acquaint me that, during his six months' residence in Cold Bath Fields prison, he had noted many things which he thought it highly desirable the world should know. He was quite sure the public



mind would be gravely affected by these disclosures, which would tend seriously to injure the character of the establishment, He had already committed his observations to paper, and the whole narrative was quite ready to go to press.

This was exactly the attempt at extortion which a very ordinary exercise of sagacity had enabled me to foresee, and which I had secretly resolved promptly to defy. I happened to be standing not far from the outer gate when this note was delivered to me ; and, having perused it, I lost not one moment in penning the following reply :—

“ The Governor of Cold Bath Fields House of Correction has learned, with much satisfaction, that the matter connected with that prison, which Captain Ashe has prepared for the public, is quite ready for the press ; and the Governor recommends its *immediate* publication. He has no doubt it will prove highly curious and entertaining ; and he thinks it most desirable that *not a moment* should be lost in giving it circulation.”

I failed to transmit the five pounds, and I

heard no more of Captain Ashe, until some few months afterwards—and then I learned that the wretched man, and all his fraudulent schemes, were for ever buried in the grave.

## CHAPTER XVII.

INTRODUCTION OF THE SEPARATE SYSTEM—DEFECTIVE  
NATURE OF THE AUTHORITY UPON WHICH IT WAS  
BASED—UNFOUNDED BOAST OF ITS EFFICACY.

So soon as the new statute came into operation, and inspectors of prisons had been nominated, a contest for the supremacy of a system commenced. Mr. Crawford had been appointed, and he brought with him his unlimited confidence in the Philadelphian dispensation, notwithstanding the energetic opposition which that system had incurred, even in the United States. The Prison Discipline Society, of Boston, upheld the Auburn, or silent associated system, and applied itself industriously to

analyze and vigorously to assail the Philadelphian plan; and, unquestionably, with good effect.

There can be no doubt of the patriotism of those Americans, who, in the absence of penal colonies, had sought to protect property, and to repress crime in their country, by the imposition of an efficient check upon the career of vicious men. Nor can their humanity be called in question. It was impossible to peruse their periodical reports without noting the pure and Christian spirit which they breathed. Their zeal, however, had blinded them to the ratio of endurance, which the human mind and the physical frame of man are equal to sustain; and it was well for suffering humanity that publicity should have been given to their labours, and the special attention of competing brethren awakened to their results.

At the first blush, the penitentiary system of Philadelphia and Pittsburg, won partisans and admirers; for not only did Mr. Crawford pronounce it to be supremely humane, and undeniably efficacious, but Messrs. De Beau-

mont, and De Tocqueville, French commissioners (who deserve all honour for their enlightened zeal in every useful inquiry), passed also a glowing eulogium upon its softening tendencies, and reforming influence. The Boston Prison Discipline Society, on the contrary, assailed it with unsparing condemnation, and, by its able reports, and close analysis of figures, and sanitary data, attracted the attention of philanthropists of other countries, who had looked deeply into the subject of criminal jurisprudence. Amongst others, Mr. Samuel Hoare gave to the penitentiary system, in its new and stringent form, his unequivocal disapproval; and Mr. Strachan—a magistrate of talent and influence—with equal resolution also opposed it.

Unfortunately, there was associated with Mr. Crawford—as a joint home inspector—the Rev. Whitworth Russell, who had for some years previously been chaplain of the Millbank Penitentiary. This gentleman was possessed of very considerable abilities, but he was—at the same time—dogmatical and arbitrary to the last degree. He was singularly indifferent to

the feelings of others, and some of his discourteous exhibitions in the metropolis—and at one provincial gaol, in particular—would shock the minds of all those who deem it the duty of a clergyman to be mild and courteous, at least.

These two inspectors determined that the separate system should become the adopted of England ; but in the probable accomplishment of such a scheme, were involved some very important considerations. The buildings necessary to its enforcement were of the most costly character, and the various local authorities, as the dispensers of the county or borough rates, were expected to be the exponents of economical principles, and nothing but the sternest necessity would justify them in furthering the demolition of existing structures, and the erection of others in their place, and thus sanctioning an enormous outlay of money.

It became, therefore, highly desirable to those gentlemen to fortify themselves by every support which bore the stamp of authority ; and, consequently, they sought to secure my

adhesion to their system, and co-operation in their plans. As the governor of the largest prison in the kingdom, and with the character I had established, my denunciation of other systems, and a zealous recommendation of their own favourite scheme, might have given to their designs a sort of authoritative countenance. At least, so I interpreted their numberless visits to me, their ceaseless arguments, and the pains they took to entice me into an adoption of their views.

Nothing could exceed their courtesy up to a certain point; but so soon as they discovered that I was inexorable, and was not to be moved by their reasoning and eloquence, than a total change marked their demeanour towards me, and the personal rudeness of Mr. Whitworth Russell became unworthily insulting, and was enough to evoke keen resentment.

The fact was, I had read attentively some of the Boston reports, which had seriously impressed my mind, and, moreover, I had long possessed opportunities to study, with effect, the separate confinement of a peculiar

class of prisoners (unnatural offenders), whom it had been deemed impossible to associate with others, and who, *ex necessitate*, were assigned to separate cells. The wasting of the frame, and general deterioration in health of that class, above all others, were unmistakeable; and, in one remarkable case, the mind, even under a qualified system of solitude, had manifestly become impaired. My experience, therefore, impelled me to coincide with the Boston reasoners; and I could not conscientiously second the efforts of Messrs. Crawford and Russell.

Thus matters progressed amidst ever-recurring differences, promoted by the inspectors, a prurient desire to discover and to magnify the faults of our system (which, by the way, was well sustained under every possible disadvantage), and a determination to vaunt the infallibility of their own, until, in the spring of 1838, the Home Inspectors published their celebrated 'third report,' which was prefaced by a very long and laboured dissertation upon prison discipline. In the form of an address to the Secretary of State, to be duly laid



before Parliament, Mr. Whitworth Russell (for the effort came from his pen) essayed to sift and examine the subject in all its bearings. Many authorities were quoted, figures were abundantly adduced, the separate system was panegyricized in a tone of magniloquent exultation, and the silent system was derided, and assailed with every vituperative term that verbose hostility could supply. Not satisfied with the ordinary circulation of a 'blue book,' the prefatory treatise was published in a separate form, and the Home Inspectors fondly imagined they had given the *coup de grace* to all existing rivalry.

The ultra advocates of the separate discipline (and there are still many) rely to this day upon the dogmatical asseverations of that report. They saw that document come forth stamped, as it were, with official authority, they reposed with conforming faith in all its statements, and they have never since troubled themselves to read the refutation which its 'facts' and inferences received.

The report was open to numerous objections.

First, its undue length and endless repetitions ; secondly, its glaringly illogical reasoning and deductions ; thirdly, its unblushing partiality, irrespective of data, bestowing praise or blame solely with reference to the quarter from whence either sympathy or diversity had been revealed with reference to their own plans. It was, in short, a production purely of a partisan character ; and so insulting was the tone towards Cold Bath Fields, and so outrageously unjust was the estimate of the pretensions of that prison, that I could not tamely submit to such injustice, but determined to expose the weaknesses and fallacies of the entire production.

The subjects involved in the discussion are highly instructive, elucidatory of the progress and prospects of a question vitally important to society, which still engrosses, and must continue to engross, a large share of public interest, and which can be best understood by an examination into bygone facts, and the application of a practical test to opinions ostensibly entitled to weight. Conscious that my opportunities have afforded me a more

intimate acquaintance with the subject than most living men, I propose to continue the above recital, not to exalt my individual exertions, but as a means to amplify and expound all the material points appertaining to a most momentous topic.

I happened to be acquainted with the then proprietors of a periodical called the *Monthly Law Magazine*, and I obtained their permission to review therein the third report of the inspectors of prisons. It was prudent on my part to conceal my authorship of this review; and the desired *incognito* was communicated to the proprietors, and admitted by them as an acknowledged condition. Excepting to those gentlemen, to my own intimate friends, and to one single magistrate of the county (who perused the MS.), I preserved a discreet silence on the subject. Under the anonymous authority of that convenient and mysterious pronoun 'We,' I boldly attacked the official essay, without the dread of aught but conjecture to point to me as the author of the strictures. My paper, too long for one number, was divided into two

parts, and the first appeared in October, 1838, and was concluded in the ensuing number.

In the first place, I struck a mortal blow at Mr. Whitworth Russell, as a reliable authority. He was one of those men who aptly illustrated that line of the poet

“ Still in extremes he knows no happy mean,”

and bounding into opposite conclusions, was equally intolerant in the temporary maintenance of either. Thus, although he had, conjointly with Mr. Crawford, signed the present report about May, 1838, all its theories were in direct contradiction to the evidence he had given before the Lords' committee in 1835. The value of practical experience became in this instance a delusion. Mr. Russell then spoke as the experienced chaplain of the Millbank Prison; in the report, as an inspector of prisons, and these conflicting views became the more irreconcilable, because in those days the Millbank establishment was conducted, to a great extent, on the principle of separation.

OPINIONS IN 1835—LORDS'  
FIRST REPORT.

Page 116 : "A decidedly penal labour, such as the *treadwheel* or crank wheel, is the only labour that my experience could induce me to recommend." And again at page 118 : "And therefore it is, I consider, that for prison labour the *treadwheel* or crank wheel is much preferable."

Page 118 : "I would wish upon this point also to say, that even if a trade could be taught in a manner that would benefit the individual and assist his reformation, it would be diminishing from the deterring parts of the system, which I think ought never to be lost sight of."

Page 117 : "And though a man may receive instruction in tailoring in three years or more, it is under

OPINIONS IN 1838—THIRD  
REPORT OF HOME IN-  
SPECTORS.

Page 4 : "The prison either leaves him to all the baneful effects of utteridleness, or its discipline consists in teaching him to *tread the wheel*—an employment which is enough to make him avoid all labour to the end of his days."

Page 3 : "The law expects and presumes that the prisoner will be trained to the habits of industry which shall survive the term of his confinement, and serve at once to guarantee and facilitate his future good behaviour."

Page 88 : "It is also in evidence that the energy and zeal with which the prisoners pursue their oc-

such disadvantages *arising from separation*, that at the end of that time very few are competent to do any but the coarsest slop work."

Page 118: "And by almost all sedentary occupations, such as tailoring, &c., habits of *indolence* are induced."

Page 117: "I have formed the opinion I have expressed *from so much thought and observation*, that I think none of the advantages which are supposed to be gained by the introduction of manufactures would induce me to consent to use them."

cupations have the effect of frequently developing a degree of skill in handicraft, which has excited the astonishment of the officers and visitors."

Page 88: "This circumstance is undoubtedly calculated not only to mitigate the horrors of seclusion, but also to make him feel a pleasure in the work which is likely to *outlast* the period of his confinement, and to adhere to him for the remainder of his life. In the Eastern Penitentiary the following occupations have been pursued without interruption or difficulty in *separate* cells: spinning, weaving, shoemaking, *tailoring*, &c."

Within a fortnight after the publication of the first part of my review, containing the above extracts in juxtaposition, I received a visit from Mr. Whitworth Russell, whose

obsequious politeness, and fulsome adulation of my administrative capacity indicated how effectually I had exposed his tergiversation. He, at least, more than surmised the authorship of that review. From that time forth I experienced no further rudeness at the hands of that gentleman, but on the contrary something not far removed from deference.

If I were to enlarge upon all the fallacies of that third report, I might attack every page of it, and as it has been regarded by many as a text-book, fraught with maxims to elucidate all the indispensable observances to perfect the separate discipline, it may work some practical good to denude it of the pretensions which ushered in the new system, and still tend to maintain it.

At page 12 we read of the silent system that it must either be upheld by 'repeated and exasperating punishments' or it must result in 'a mass of secret undetected intercourse which it is frightful to contemplate.' On the other hand of the separate system it is affirmed 'that a system must be devised which shall prevent such intercourse, not merely by making it

difficult, but by rendering it practically *impossible*.' Whereas, there then existed damning evidence, against this assumed perfectability. In 'the twelfth annual Report of the board of managers of the Prison Discipline Society of Boston,' on the authority of the Honourable John R. Adams, quoted at page 172, alarming facts had been elicited by a committee charged to examine into alleged abuses in the Eastern Penitentiary. Such a defect had been discovered in the pipes, that as that testimony sets forth 'this defect was well nigh proving fatal to the institution, inasmuch as a *general insurrection* had been concerted between the convicts, and was on the point of breaking out, when discovered by the vigilance of the Warden, and frustrated by his energy and decision.'

Moreover, it was in evidence at page 139 that in the New Penitentiary at Pittsburg, (a prison constructed, as the Boston Report says, 'at an immense expense, and occupied two years on the plan of the New Penitentiary, in Philadelphia,') 'prisoners were, in no instance (when the committee asked the ques-



tion) ignorant of the name, crime, sentence, time of liberation, &c.,’ of their fellow captives, ‘and, in some instances, able to give other information which appeared highly improper for them to possess.’

At page 137 of the Boston Report, there is the testimony of ‘Harvey Newcomb,’ who was connected with the construction of the cells at Pittsburg, and who, alluding to the general communication between the prisoners, says, “for myself, I consider it a *physical impossibility* so to construct a range of cells for the purpose of *constant confinement*, without affording facilities for conversation between prisoners.”

Here, then, were clear refutations of the proposition that the separate system rendered communication ‘practically impossible ;’ and, consequently, the condemnation of the silent system, and the exaltation of the separate discipline on that ground were clearly fallacious. The inspectors could not be, or ought not to have been, ignorant of such important facts, and became justly chargeable with wilful misrepresentation.

Again, in the comparison of the punishments attending either system, very strong assertions are used at pages 4, 7, 92, 96 of the third report; and the punishments under the silent system are affirmed to foster 'resolutions of revenge, and passions gloomy, dangerous, and resentful,' and they are reprobated as 'irritating, degrading, and hardening.' Of the other system at page 16, we read, "by no other method than that of separate confinement can extreme severity be dispensed with;" and, again at page 62 it is affirmed, "the penitentiary system is emphatically a *mild* and humane system." Whereas, it was then notorious that the gag had been an instrument of punishment in the penitentiary at Philadelphia, and had only been discontinued in consequence of its fatal results in a case which necessitated a legislative inquiry.

In the second report of the inspector of prisons for the northern and eastern district, addressed to Lord John Russell, and dated, February 1st, 1837, extracts are exhibited from the report of the Joint Committee of the Legislature of Pennsylvania, read in senate in

March, 1835, whereby it appears that a prisoner, named Plumly, was ducked with cold water for disciplinary ends, and that he was discharged 'insane.' Secondly, it reports that a convict, named Maccumsey, who had frequently displayed outrageous conduct, had been punished by the application of an iron gag. "In a short time after it was put on, it was discovered that he was becoming insensible, and it was taken off; but every effort to revive him proved ineffectual, and he died."

Here, then, we see that the assumption of mercy and mildness, as then illustrative of the separate system, were distinctly false; and there was a general want of acumen in the reasoning and deductions observable throughout this third report. Thus, at page 86, when combating the assertions of the enemies to separation, numerous offences said to be committed are specified as hostile inventions, and denounced as libels on the system. The report affirms, "to this objection it is a sufficient and conclusive answer that, in fact, such offences seldom or never occur in those prisons which are conducted upon the principle of separation."

Whereas, at page 60 of this very report, while enlarging on the reclaiming influence of the separate system, the Philadelphian inspectors are quoted to the following effect:—"We mark, *generally*, that at first the prisoner indulges in morose or vindictive feelings, and is *guilty* of turbulent and malicious conduct, but after a few weeks he adopts a more subdued tone," &c. These two descriptions are inconsistent the one with the other, and falsify the deductions of the inspectors.

In apportioning censure or approval to various establishments, the capricious partiality of these commentators was most ungenerous and unjust. Of the prisons in or near London, those of Cold Bath Fields and Tothill Fields maintained the system of silence with laudable perseverance, and the two establishments extorted the admiration of all who studied them. At the Millbank Prison there was an unsuccessful fusion of the two systems; but, as Mr. Whitworth Russell had a complacent feeling towards the latter, it received his commendation, while the two former were vituperated. It is curious to examine the grounds of these diverse

verdicts. At page 111, the report classes the Westminster Bridewell and the Cold Bath Fields House of Correction with the ill-regulated prisons in London and the vicinity ; and it is stated to be “ a fact that no young person can be committed to any one of those places without being rendered worse by imprisonment, and the more dangerous to the community.” Millbank Prison, however, is advantageously mentioned, and is complimented by the assertion that it “ had effected much good.” Such praise was bestowed in the month of *May*, notwithstanding the avowal of the Millbank authorities themselves—in a document furnished to a special Committee of the Lords, in the preceding *March*, to be found at page 95 of the Lords’ Report—to the following effect :—“ Notwithstanding our rules to the contrary, extensive communications are carried on, and we find that the prisoners learn each other’s histories, form friendships and enmities, and do each other much harm by their intercourse.”<sup>1</sup> In discovering all this inconsistent

<sup>1</sup> Again at page 96 of the Lords’ Report, the Millbank authorities proceed to say of those likely to be

censure and panegyric, I had good reason to affirm that such conduct in official servants exhibited the very climax of injustice, and rendered them unworthy of public confidence ; and I read those gentlemen a lecture on the duty of truthfulness and impartiality.

But it was in the Inspector's contrast of the successful development of the separate over the associated silent system that their logical acumen sunk into utter contempt. Omitting all the boastful assertions concerning the refining tendency of the Philadelphian Penitentiary—with bygone addenda from Horsham, Petworth, and Gloucester, eulogistic of separation—let me point, as a culminating beacon of success, to the Bridewell of Glasgow. I presume to cast no aspersion upon that establishment. Whatever eminent intelligence could effect, had, according to disposable means, been there effected. The failure arose from the inevitable nature of crime and crimi-

reformed, "that number would in all probability be much increased, were it not for the contaminating influence arising from the communication between prisoners."

nals in crowded towns. But to the third report.

At page 36 it is affirmed of the silent system—"it has hitherto had no sensible effect in the repression of crime ; it does not permanently deter ; it has no tendency to reform," &c. At page 51, Glasgow Bridewell elicits the ensuing compliment : " This prison, which has deservedly obtained a considerable share of public attention, on account of its extent, its admirable regulations, and the *beneficial results* which have attended the judicious and zealous enforcement of them," &c.; and again, at page 52, the experiment of Glasgow, it is affirmed, " upon the whole has been *very successful*, and offers *great encouragement* for the further development of its principles," &c.

Well, such opposite conclusions were drawn from the following well-attested data. In every properly regulated prison, great pains are taken to ascertain correctly the re-commitments to it. At Cold Bath Fields, the utmost scrutiny was employed to accomplish this object ; and, whatever the hardihood of criminals might be, they could scarcely escape from our

searching inquiries. If the denial of the culprit were resolute, and our recognition imperfect—while our conviction was strong—I used, rather than submit to imposition, to send to his residence, and to police-stations, to inquire, and industriously elicit the truth. Throughout a long series of years (I may say undeviatingly, within my experience), the re-commitments amounted to *one-third* of the total of commitments within each year.

Consequently, with *one-third* of our commitments proving to be re-commitments, the Report affirmed that *our* system had hitherto had “no sensible effect in the repression of crime,” and that it had “no tendency to reform.”

At Glasgow Bridewell, the re-commitments were found to be *one-half* of the numbers committed. The inspector, at that period, for Scotland, Mr. Hill, in his report, admitted that startling fact in the following terms—“As nearly as can be ascertained, about one-half of those who are imprisoned never return a second time”—which assuredly means that the other half did return. But, notwithstanding that excess of re-commitments against Glasgow, as compared



with Cold Bath Fields, the report most logically exulted in 'beneficial results,' and pronounced the labours of the Glasgow disciplinarians to have been "very successful," and to offer "great encouragement" for perseverance.

I think it must be admitted, that I had ample materials to enable me to inflict a severe castigation on the home inspectors ; and I had the satisfaction to learn, from many quarters, that my correction was acknowledged, and had told effectively. In the meantime, an experiment, upon a large scale, was about to be made at the 'Model Prison,' at Pentonville, where 600 criminals, under sentence of transportation, were consigned to separation for eighteen months'. At the expiration of that time, they were transferred to Millbank Prison, where their attenuated condition, and mental disturbance, created a marked sensation in the mind of the then governor, Captain Groves, who could not repress his condemnation of separation to so fatal an extent. It since became, from necessity, the practice in the Pentonville Prison instantly to associate

all those who exhibit failing powers of body or mind ; and such, I believe, is now universally the case in separate prisons.

The public may now contemplate the very insufficient grounds upon which the separate system was ushered into England. It rested upon conclusions, seized upon and held fast, equally against facts and sound deductions.

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